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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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THE MURDER OF THE KURDS

Why Bush let it happen, and how he could stop it

Albert Wohlstetter & Fred Hoffman

A report from Kurdistan

Peter Galbraith

Washington's shame

The Editors

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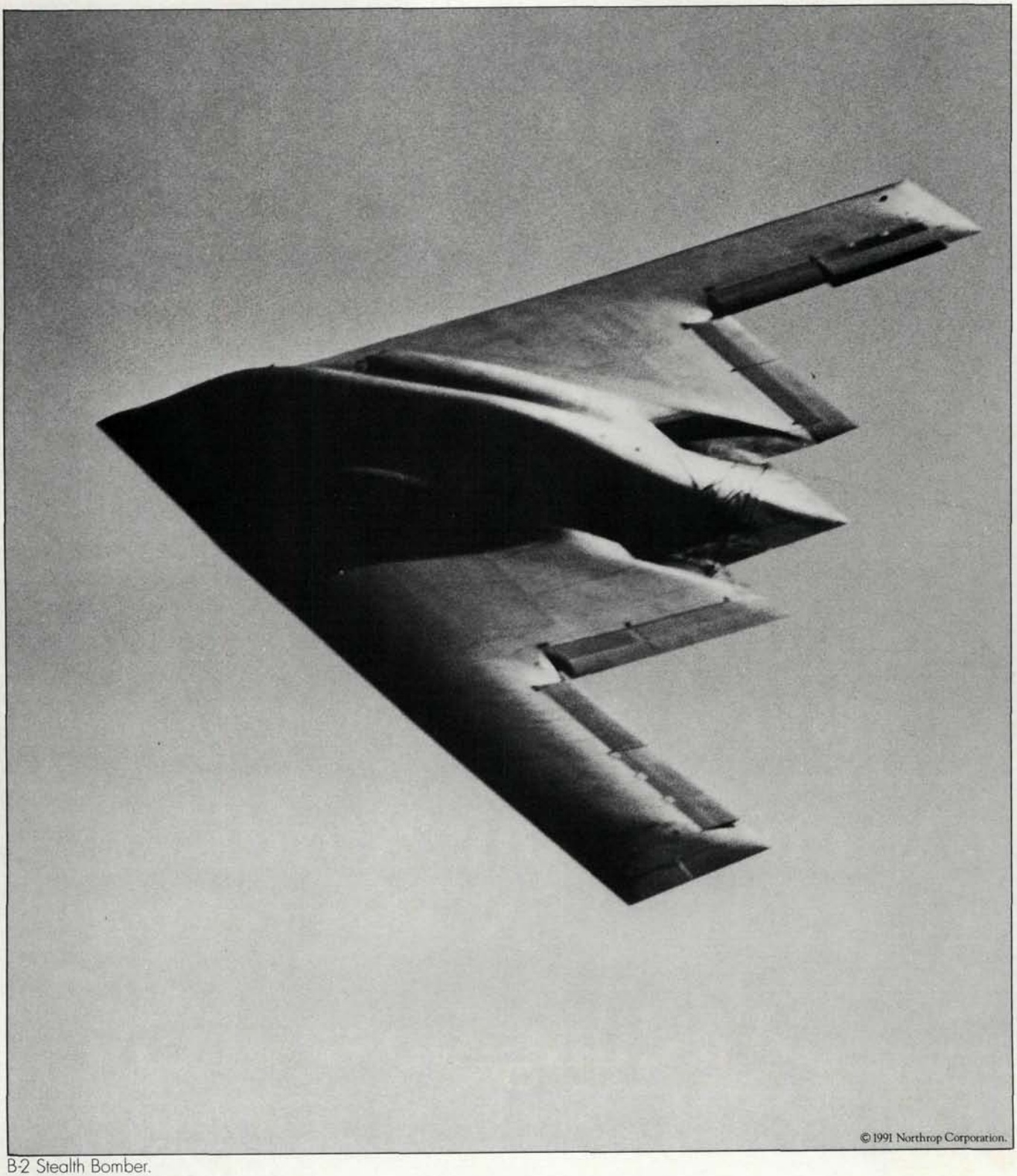

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

APRIL 29, 1991

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ISSUE 3,980

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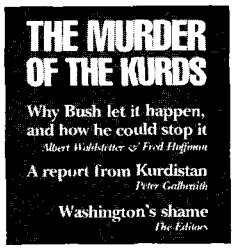
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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 204, Number 17, Issue 3,980, April 29, 1991. (Printed in the U.S. on April 10, 1991.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 7 & 14, July 15 & 22, Aug. 19 & 26, and Sept. 16 & 23, 1991) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). ©1991 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322. For subscription problems call 800-274-6686.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Cover-up

"Ronald Reagan will never be bald as long as he lives. But he may very well get gray in Washington." —a Reagan spokesman quoted in *The New York Times*, December 18, 1980

But he never did. Or did he? There is no entry on "hair" in the index to Lou Cannon's fat new book on the Reagan presidency, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (Simon and Schuster). Reagan's own recent autobiography, *An American Life* (Simon and Schuster), suffers the same unfortunate lacuna. Nor is there any index reference to hair in *For the Record* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), the otherwise vindictive memoir of Reagan's chief of staff Donald T. Regan—though Regan does have three citations under "Reagan, Ronald, hearing problem of"—or in the granddaddy of Reaganite kiss-and-tells, David Stockman's *The Triumph of Politics* (Harper & Row).

So we must rely on Kitty Kelley. Not only does the index of her *Nancy Reagan: The Unauthorized Biography* (busy, busy Simon and Schuster) contain a generous three citations under "Reagan, Ronald Wilson, hair color of" (plus a fourth under "hairstyle of"). But under "Reagan, Nancy Davis, hairdressers of," the citations go on for three lines. The key reference is on page 292. After explaining how Clairol paid Nancy Reagan's hairdresser $20,000 a year to fly from Beverly Hills to Washington every three weeks and do her hair for free, Kelley notes: "Whenever he visited the White House to color the First Lady's hair, Julius also dyed the President's gray roots, which he had been doing secretly since 1968."

This revelation might strike most people as less interesting than Kelley's allegation that Nancy was canoodling with Jerry Lewis on the desk in the Oval Office. (Have I got that right?) But many will find it a good deal more plausible. Most people probably assume by now that of course a man of Reagan's age can't have a full head of naturally brown hair. And yet the Reagans and their spokespeople continue to deny that he dyes it.

A small matter, perhaps. But you can read the saga of Ronald Reagan's hair as a metaphor for the 1980s, a time when deceit by public officials reached new levels of respectability. Reagan set a new standard of brazen duplicity of which George Bush and future presidents are the beneficiaries. I spent the last couple of years of the 1970s in a frenzy of rage against Jimmy Carter for transparent propaganda falsehoods of the sort that are our daily diet in the age of Bush. Now it is just "spin control."

Reagan is legendary for his ability to insist with seeming sincerity that black is white (or, in this case, that white is black). Although the hair question may not be as vital to historians as, say, his role in Iran-contra, it is worth cherishing for its starkness. The usual muddling devices are not available. He cannot claim he didn't know whether they were dying his hair, as he claimed not to know about the trading of arms for hostages. He cannot claim that he can't remember, since it has to be done regularly. He cannot blame Congress for dying his hair against his will, as with the deficit. He can't say it's a matter of national security. And it's not one of those complicated questions the nation soon learned to give Ronald Reagan a pass on, like how Strategic Defense would work.

The press's approach to the hair question went through phases, similar to the phases in the press's general approach to Reagan's truthfulness. Phase one, during his campaign for president, was a fairly energetic skepticism. Reagan was forced repeatedly to deny that he colored his hair. The first interviews with sycophantic barbers appeared, parodying the posture of the loyal presidential aide with their praise of his wavy texture and insistence that the hair was natural down to the roots (though one conceded that Reagan might resort to Grecian Formula).

Reagan claimed that during his governorship, Sacramento reporters had stolen some of his clippings from the barbershop floor for closer inspection, and found no artifice. This became a treasured part of the Ronald Reagan Anecdote Collection, repeated by Nancy as recently as 1989, embroidered with the assertion that the hair had been sent out for laboratory tests. This version surfaced just last year in a "Dear Abby" column. Dear Abby moved the time frame to the Reagan presidency and enhanced it by having the reporter work "for one of those gossipy newspapers (sold primarily in supermarkets)."

Phase two came in the early White House years, as reporters grew used to the Reagan style and wearied of trying to catch and expose every falsehood. Most reporters undoubtedly assumed that he dyed his hair, but despaired of ever proving it or making anyone care. The issue slipped from sight.

It was at this point that a second theme started to emerge: Reagan is starting to turn gray. In May 1982 *The New York Times* reported that Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker "confided to some of his aides that for the first time he had noticed some gray in Mr. Reagan's hair." The next month the *Times* itself reported that Reagan's "new, puffier style seemed to do more to show off his traces of gray." (Presidential barber Milton Pitts characteristically stonewalled: "There is no new hair style.") In November 1982 the *London Guardian* observed that "the miracle hair, sleek brown and shiny when he took office, is notably grayer now." And *The Washington Post* confirmed the next month: "His once jet-black hair is now streaked with gray."

Phase three was during and after the triumphal 1984 re-election campaign. Even the cynical Washington press corps came to believe in the Reagan magic. Maybe a man who can carry forty-nine states really can approach his 80s with a full head of naturally brown hair. Only Geraldine Ferraro had the guts to note "the fact that Ronald Reagan dyes his hair." Meanwhile the *London Financial Times* observed, in January 1985, "His still luxuriant brown hair may be beginning to show traces of gray." (Milton Pitts: "His hair color has not changed any time in the last four years.")

In phase four, the failures and disappointments of Reagan's second term reignited a few doubts, but the myth basically survived. A conservative activist, enraged at the president's halfhearted support for Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, said, "Maybe Reagan does dye his hair."

Meanwhile, the hair monitors continued to detect the beginning of the end. The *Financial Times* observed in August 1987: "The loss of public trust is at last turning Ronald Reagan's hair gray." In September 1988 *The Washington Post* detected "a few gray [hairs] poking through." And a December 1988 *Post* valedictory noted, "There are streaks of gray in the mane of black hair, so envied by his rivals."

Then came phase five. Shortly after he left office, Reagan's head was shaved for brain surgery, and briefly, as it grew back, his hair was completely gray. How to explain it? In October 1989, on his famous $2 million speechmaking visit to Japan, *The New York Times* reported that his crew cut "appears considerably more gray than his characteristically long brown locks." But "a spokesman for Reagan vehemently denied that any artificial color had ever been applied." In Decem-

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CORRESPONDENCE

Standing firm in '92

To the editors:

The idea of the Democrats nominating a presidential candidate on the basis of one issue—his or her vote on the Persian Gulf war—is absurd ("Fear of '92," TRB, March 25). To do so would merely confirm the Republican rhetoric that they are the party of foreign policy expertise, and the Democrats mere afterthoughts in the global arena. We Democrats had a majority opinion on the war—we advocated an extended period of sanctions, we did not unconditionally oppose war—and we must stick by our decision. To do otherwise makes us look vacillating and weak.

I think instead that we should: (1) continue to address the problems that face us at home, problems that the Bush administration has forgotten in the afterglow of the war; and (2) probe into the Reagan and Bush administrations' cozy ties with Saddam Hussein in the years and months leading up to the war, as well as our continuing relationship with brutal dictators such as Hafez al Assad of Syria.

LEONARD FOXWELL JR.
Cambridge, Maryland
(Via 900 number)

Bum rap

To the editors:

Let me register my strong protest at the one-page diatribe against Judith Kipper ("Shrink Rap" by David Segal, March 25). Both its tone and content were unworthy of TNR. Mr. Segal takes Ms. Kipper to task for a lack of language skills and regional knowledge. But people with much better credentials than she have made far more serious errors of judgment over a longer period of time. Her "singular" approach to the region stems from a deep commitment to resolving conflicts. She's not a partisan, she's not aloof, she's not that naive; to characterize her as some kind of do-gooder "getting-to-yes" type is malicious.

At a seminar in Madison in July, Ms. Kipper was insistent that "Saddam Hussein had to be stopped," that he was "going to plunge the area into trouble," or words to that effect. She was particularly concerned about Saddam's arms buildup and his long-range plans. Other than the Israelis—who had been crying wolf for so long that many people stopped listening to them—she was the only person who expressed the proper degree of alarm before the invasion.

STEPHEN P. COHEN
Urbana, Illinois

The writer is professor of political science at the University of Illinois.

Zbig error

To the editors:

Regarding Jacob Weisberg's "Gulfballs" (March 25): as it happens, on the eve of the ground fighting I published a clear-cut prediction in *The New York Times* that "Iraq's army—already substantially reduced and immobilized by air power—could indeed be quickly defeated." I went on to state that "early estimates of thousands of U.S. casualties no longer apply."

Thus I was not even a contender for a Zbig award. Mr. Weisberg has evidently been misled by remarks attributed to me that I never made. What I *did* say was surely unexceptionable: "As an advocate you only make forecasts when they are conducive to your advocacy." I never said or implied the other remark attributed to me: "I was not going to give my real forecast of casualties."

From the start of the crisis, I argued against an ocean of skepticism to advocate an air war. I said and believed, and still believe, that a *conventional* ground war, preceded only by preliminary "softening up" bombardment, would result in thousands of U.S. casualties. In the event, there was no ground war, only an almost unchallenged advance against an enemy already defeated by air power.

Thus I did not withhold or misrepresent my own forecasts. It was rather that radically different situations, before and after the bombing campaign, called for radically different estimates.

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK
Washington, D.C.

Doctors' orders

To the editors:

In his analysis of the employability of the HIV-infected health care worker ("Unkindest Cut," March 11), Jon Cohen is too generous to the position of the American Medical Association, which has endorsed exclusion of infected physicians from performing invasive procedures, or the self-confession of their infection to patients.

For HIV-infected physicians, the AMA has adopted a "no risk to patients" approach that it has never even seriously contemplated for physicians affected by other conditions, all arguably much more germane to patient safety and health than the HIV infection of their health providers. Those include stress, fatigue, aging, side effects of ongoing medications, disruptive behaviors, psychiatric conditions, mediocre professional skill, surgeon-specific wound infection rates, and surgeon-specific rates of post-operative and peri-operative mortality. Patients rarely seek information about these conditions from health providers, and the AMA does not require that physicians confess these relevant factors to patients before treating them. In fact, when public health authorities have attempted to address these more significant risks by, for example, restricting the numbers of consecutive hours residents may work, many organized medical groups have registered fierce opposition.

Simply put, the AMA is applying a higher, double standard to the HIV-infected physician. Such differential treatment is irrational and indefensible, if improving patient safety is its true goal.

MARK BARNES
New York, New York

The writer is policy director of the New York State AIDS Institute.

To the editors:

Jon Cohen reasonably points out that the risk of contracting HIV from a medical provider is small, but his arguments against mandatory testing of surgeons, dentists, and other medical providers are entirely unfounded. Hoping through comparison to dismiss fears of HIV-infection in these circumstances as unlikely, he offers statistics portraying the likelihood of other fatal care-related events. It is inconsequential that one is more likely to die from "penicillin or anesthesia . . . than to be infected by an HIV-positive surgeon." Just as we regulate anesthesiologists and seek to determine a patient's drug allergies prior to their exposure to them, so too should we seek to regulate the conditions under which patients can be exposed to HIV through medical care. The fact that there are other risks of surgery out there is all the more reason to reduce or eliminate those over which we do have some control.

For health care workers and gay men it is an "unsettling reality that . . . it's impossible to live without a minimal level of risk." And for health care patients there will always be some minimal risk as well. Testing, as Mr. Cohen points out, will not detect all infections and cannot detect subsequent HIV exposure. But the risk of exposure can be substantially reduced by

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 29, 1991

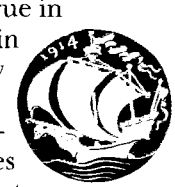
DESERT SHAME

On April 8 Secretary of State James Baker paid a visit to the New World Order. It was on a hillside in southern Turkey, and he could bear it for only seven minutes: a barren mountain valley teeming with perhaps 50,000 of the more than 1 million Kurds who are homeless, freezing, starving, and still fleeing for their lives. Mr. Baker's friend and boss, President Bush, having destroyed half of Iraq's military, reduced much of its urban infrastructure to rubble, and called upon the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam Hussein, has decided it would be unwise to "interfere in the internal affairs" of Iraq. So he has washed his hands of what he has wrought and has left the Kurds and the Shiites of Iraq to be slaughtered by Saddam, still well entrenched in power. Can it really be that the global order America went to war for is designed to protect only the kingdoms of emirs, regardless of the consequences to millions of people?

Mr. Bush has even botched what ought to come easy to one who presumes to make life "kinder and gentler"—the task of humanitarian relief. The offer of succor is, after all, something the United States would have rightly felt itself obliged to do even if it had played no role in the events that precipitated the suffering—if the catastrophe had been a natural one, like an earthquake. Yet even though the United States successfully moved half a million heavily armed and fully equipped troops to the Middle East, it hasn't been able to move tents, food, fuel, and medicine a few hundred miles to help the Kurds. Mr. Bush was fishing and playing tennis while the Kurds and Shiites were desperately running from Saddam's advancing armies. He was throwing out baseballs as relief experts warned that refugees might die by the tens of thousands unless help arrived quickly. Most Democrats have also been unconscionably silent. It was left to the European Community to suggest that the United Nations set up enclaves in Iraq where refugees might be temporarily housed and protected from annihilation. No one has yet conceived of what must happen when these temporary havens become more permanent, when this humanitarian problem reveals its political origins more inescapably. A few months ago the United States mobilized the U.N. to sanction a war. Where is American leadership now?

Humanitarian relief is the very least we should have provided once Saddam's armies were driven out of Kuwait. Indeed, for Mr. Baker to pledge a massive relief effort now is merely a way to salve America's conscience in the face of the human tragedy that the administration has helped to cause. The United States could have kept the war going for a few more days in order to put Saddam's Republican Guards out of action. Failing that, it could have used its air superiority to ground (or shoot down) the gunships that Saddam unleashed on the rebellious Kurds and Shiites. In spite of the supposed cease-fire prohibitions set up by the United States, there are reports that Saddam even used fixed-wing aircraft to strafe the Kurds.

The administration's failure to follow through raises not only moral questions but strategic ones as well. George Bush apparently believes in a New World Order based entirely on the nation-state. This is true in his cynical dealings with the rulers of the Soviet Union, who are locked in battle with the Soviet republics; it is true in his callous neglect of the plight of Tibet within Communist China. In his new world, states may be gently criticized for brutalizing people within their borders, but no decisive action can be taken against them for doing so—even if the peoples themselves feel no loyalty whatever toward the state. Thus the secretary of state looked upon the Kurds and said, "Today, we have witnessed the suffering and despair of the Iraqi people." Mr. Baker's very language spoke volumes. He balked at using the word "Kurds," as if fearful that his fragile intellectual universe would start crumbling before the reality in front of his eyes.



The disgraceful rationale behind American strategy right now is that it is being shaped in order to suit Saudi Arabia, which wants its Sunni Arab brethren in charge of Iraq even if that means allowing Saddam to remain in power. The Saudis—in fact, the entire Arab world—have said nothing about Saddam's massacres of the non-Arab Kurds and the non-Sunni Shiites. America, for its part, has said practically noth-

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ing about the massacre of Shiites, reserving its compassion for the Kurds. To do that would risk upsetting the entire premise that Iraq is to be maintained as a Sunni-dominated integral unity.

Another of the administration's miscalculations has been the expectation that a disgruntled Baathist, Salah Omar Ali al-Takriti, for example, or generals in Baghdad would topple Saddam Hussein in anger at his disastrous policies, and that some good outcome would result. (Perhaps this belief arose from Mr. Bush's penchant for personalization: get the bad guy out and the bad will stop.) Administration officials even thought that it would *hasten* Saddam's ouster if his armies made quick work of the Kurds and Shiites. Once the rebellions were over, they reasoned, the cohesion in Baghdad would dissolve.

None of this makes sense. Far from weakening Saddam, the brutal suppression of a major rebellion will most likely strengthen him. We will end Desert Storm by buttressing Saddam Hussein—or someone indistinguishable from him—in power. But behind the logic that created this tragedy, there lies a deeper fallacy. The very structure of Iraq means that there's little likelihood of a regime more palatable than Saddam's. The combination of Shiites, Kurds, and Sunnis in one state is a recipe for murderous control or chaos.

The United States must face its responsibilities. We have helped exacerbate the Kurdish and Shiite problems, which have been there for decades, but which, until now, we have been able to ignore. We cannot ignore them any longer. We cannot establish permanent refugee camps for a million Kurds in the barren mountains along Iraq's northern borders, allow Saddam to occupy Iraqi Kurdistan, and have the restive Kurds destabilize Iran and Turkey. We cannot remove our troops from southern Iraq and allow Saddam to butcher the Shiite refugees we leave behind. To pursue such a policy—or non-policy—would be to ruin much of what has so far been accomplished.

What, then, can we do? We do not have to march on Baghdad to achieve stability and justice. We do not have to overthrow Saddam and take over the government of Iraq. But having failed to stop Saddam's armies in the first place, we can now drive them back out of the areas they've occupied, so that the refugees can return home, and fight for greater autonomy. We can re-launch an aerial bombardment of Saddam's military machine, which, while not embroiling us in the Iraqi civil war, can allow Iraqi civilians to take matters in their own hands effectively. As Albert Wohlstetter and Fred Hoffman argue in this issue (see "The Bitter End," page 20), we still have the means at our disposal to tip the balance in favor of the opposition. We have used our air power before; we can use it again.

Will President Bush need to risk some of his precious popularity at home to get this done? Sure, but that's nothing compared with what he's in the process of losing now: America's honor as a humane nation and the trust that peoples all over the world have in our system. Who else, after all, will trust us if we allow the Kurds and Shiites to perish? And why should they?

NOTEBOOK

QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Should U.N. coalition forces go to the aid of the Kurds and Shiites whose rebellion Saddam Hussein is crushing, even if that involves some American casualties? You can make your view known on our Sound Off Line, 1-900-726-6671. . . . Respondents to our Sound Off question two weeks ago on dealing with crime favored the Brady bill's gun control approach over the Bush administration's death penalty emphasis, 69 percent to 31 percent.

FLACK FOR THE DAMNED: The latest grim news from the lobbying industry is that the democratic government of Nicaragua has just hired a certain Mr. Edward J. van Kloberg III as its Washington lobbyist. Mr. van Kloberg's previous clients, Violeta Chamorro might be interested to learn, include Saddam Hussein and Nicolae Ceausescu. His illustrious résumé includes a 1984 conviction for fraudulent activity, a criminal record that doubtless helps provide some personal empathy for his clients: one of the better known is Mobutu Sese Seko, the legendary Zairean kleptocrat. Maybe Mrs. Chamorro wants some advice on how to squeeze more money out of the U.S. government—Mr. van Kloberg's conviction was for faking letters of endorsement from foreign embassies in order to obtain bank loans. But at $5,000 a month, she could probably get Charles Keating cheaper.

AND THAT ANTHRAX IS FOR CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT: We got a letter the other day from the chairman of the Republican National Committee, Clayton Yeutter, defending himself from the charge of hypocrisy offered in a recent Washington Diarist ("Matters of Conscience" by Jacob Weisberg, April 8). Mr. Yeutter, who was until recently secretary of Agriculture, claims it is not fair to cite him as an example of Republicans unwilling to take action against Saddam Hussein before he invaded Kuwait. "I have never been fond of Saddam Hussein or his government, and within the Administration I was a strong proponent of doing whatever was necessary to drive him out of Kuwait. Moreover, the credit guarantees my former Department provided [to Iraq] were intended to benefit our U.S. agricultural exporters, and not for the purpose of assisting Hussein or any other foreign leader." Oh—that's all right, then.

DEPUTY DOUG: No sirree, Douglas Wilder isn't going to let anyone spoil his presidential campaign by calling him a mushy, soft-on-crime liberal. In the wake of the absurd and highly publicized fraternity bust at the University of Virginia, the governor has called for mandatory drug-testing for *all* college students. This is such a dumb idea that even the former Drug Czar, Bill

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Bennett, and the new one, Bob Martinez, are against it. With this proposal Mr. Wilder has reached a new low in pre-presidential posturing. There are other, saner ways of proving that a liberal can be tough on crime and concerned with the damage done by drug dealing (especially in the inner cities)—and ones that don't seem like such blatant tactical positioning.

THOSE YUGOSLAV POLITICAL PARTIES IN FULL: To help augment awareness of developments in the Balkans, we provide the following round-up as a reader service. For brevity's sake, we limit ourselves only to the parties officially registered in Bosnia-Herzegovina, one of Yugoslavia's six republics. To register, by the way, a party needs a minimum of thirty members. And now, the list:

> The League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina-Social Democratic Party; Democratic Action Party; Serbian Democratic Party; Croatian Democratic Alliance; Socialist Youth Alliance-Democratic Union; Party of Yugoslavs-Sarajevo Chapter; Republican Party; Alliance of Yugoslavia's Reform Forces; Democratic Socialist Alliance; Ecological Movement of Greens; Headquarters Green Party; Ecological Movement "Grasshopper"; Yugoslav Democratic Party-Fatherland Front; Yugoslav Peasant Party; United Socialist Party of Yugoslavia; Serbian Revival Movement; Yugoslav Democratic Party; Private Initiative Party; Democratic Community; Democratic Agreement Party; Progressive Party of Yugoslavs; Democratic Community; Democratic Party; Democratic Freedom Party; Social-Democratic Alliance; Party for Democracy and the Rule of Law; Herzegovina's Democratic Union; Peasant's-Worker's Party; Bosnian Democratic Party; Yugoslav Democratic Party; People's Council for People's Protection; Party of Democratic Reforms; Worker's Democratic Party-Federalist Party; United Yugoslav Movement; People's Party Bosnia; Socialist Youth Organization-Democratic Union; Yugoslav Movement for Work, Solidarity and Equality; People's Democratic Party "Gajret"; *Still organizing*: Bosnian-Muslim Party; Socialist Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Er, that's it.

(with thanks to Daniel Bell, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

OUT TO 'LUNCH': To Miss Kitty Kelley we already owe a lot for tedium relief in George Bush's Washington. But with the publication of her new book, *Nancy Reagan: The Unauthorized Biography*, we also owe her something more lasting: a new metaphor. The use of the word "lunch" (with the vital quotation marks) to describe alleged closed-doors encounters between Mrs. Reagan and Frank Sinatra in the White House should now be enshrined in the circumlocutionary linguistic etiquette of polite Washingtonians. From now on, doing lunch—make that doing "lunch," or perhaps "doing" "lunch"—will mean more than just another overpriced power-schmooze. And for the truly "hungry," how about "dinner"?

YOU'RE WELCOME, TREES: No, your hands aren't any bigger than they were last week. But following a general trend in the magazine industry, the page size of this week's NEW REPUBLIC (and all NEW REPUBLICs to come) is just a shade smaller. There is no diminution in the contents, however, and this adjustment, small though it is, will enable us to keep down any increases in the subscription price.

SORRY: An apology is due Gerardo Joffe of San Francisco for the singularly offensive headline ("Final Solution") we put over his letter in our March 18 issue. We don't agree with the policy that Mr. Joffe argued was worth considering—the forced "transfer" of Palestinians out of the occupied territories. But we do assure him, and our readers, that we do not see an equivalence between such a policy and actual physical extermination. ●

TIRANA POSTCARD

ENVER-ENDING STORY

By Anna Husarska

The copy of Volume 54 of the works of the late Albanian leader Enver Hoxha that I'm looking at is partly burnt and partly covered with blood. I picked it up in the northern town of Shkoder, among the debris in front of the Communist—styled "Labor"—Party headquarters on April 3, the day after police shot into a crowd of several thousand opponents of the ruling party, killing three men and wounding fifty-seven others. It was lying among broken typewriters and burnt pieces of furniture that the angry mob threw out the windows after setting the building on fire. Close to the remaining barricade on this main street were scattered Party members' files and unused bulletins from the parliamentary elections three days before, the first multicandidate elections here since the end of World War II. The elections returned the ruling Communists to power, after widespread evidence of electoral fraud throughout the countryside. But in the cities, Shkoder among them, opposition candidates beat the Communists by five to one.

The day after the election, the crowd outside the Democratic Party headquarters in Tirana shouted: "*E duam Shqiperine si gjithe Europa*," which in this impossible language means, "We want Albania to be part of Europe." Other Eastern Europeans have used identical slogans, demanding that the prefix "East" be reduced to a geographical denominator. But no other country in that region has been so far removed from Europe.

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Albania is a medieval fortress with 3.5 million subjects in thrall to Hoxha, who until his death in 1985 made Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu look like an amateur Pasha.

The last few months have seen some liberalization. Father Simon Jubani, a 65-year-old Catholic priest, was recently released from jail, where he had spent twenty-six years for "preservation of literature with religious content." Now he was celebrating Shkoder's first Easter Sunday mass since 1945. The floor of Shkoder's church still bore the paint marks of the basketball court it had been all these years. A lonely icon of the Virgin hung on the wall amid the mixed aromas of incense and sweaty socks. Other icons are to be returned to the church from a building in the central square that served as the Museum of Atheism. Now it's the local headquarters of the main opposition force, the Democratic Party.

Throughout the country I found the people amazingly charming, even in some not so charming situations. The riot police in Tirana stationed to prevent Albanians from demanding visas at Western embassies smiled at me and let me try their helmets on—they later ran after a group of prospective visa-seekers waving their clubs, but then they smiled again. The soldiers who guarded the entry to the port of Durres, where would-be refugees will jump onto just about any boat (80,000 did so or left through the mountains in the past couple of months), laughed as I photographed them and their shining bayonets. The women near Lezhe in northern Albania waved to my passing car as they worked the fields barefoot using medieval tools. The crowds in front of the Democratic Party (PD) headquarters smiled as they shouted "Enver Hitler," referring to their former ruler. They smiled and they flashed the "V" sign (the symbol of the PD) as tears ran down their cheeks because the party they put their hopes in had lost the elections. They even smiled as they passed me in the street on their ever present bicycles a half hour after police beat them and shot into the air.

The one time when sorrow overpowered smiles was during the funeral in Shkoder of the three men shot during the rally in front of the Labor Party (PPSH) headquarters. (A fourth man died two days later from wounds.) The crime was all the more outrageous because, according to many eyewitnesses, the 24-year-old opposition leader was asked by police to come and calm the people. He was shot from behind as he stood facing the crowd.

The open coffin with his body and the other two coffins were carried in total silence (save the funeral march played by the city band) in a one-hour procession. When I focused my lousy little camera on the head of the cortege, the 20,000 people came to a standstill to allow the foreign journalist to get a photograph. Albanians understand how important it is for the world to know about them and their tragedy.

Earlier, at the main square filled with 30,000 mourners, everybody respected the request of the PD leader Sali Berisha, who asked that the "V" sign be the only slogan. And all listened, many weeping, as he paid "the last homage to the angels of democracy, those who will not see another spring because they fell for the spring of democracy in Albania." Berisha warned that "those who kill the innocent have no place in our country" and said that "democracy through peaceful means is the only road" that Albania can take. Half of Shkoder's population was there.

Albanian Communists effectively employed the same trick that their Romanian brethren played: they "fast forwarded" the elections so that there would be no time to educate people and crack the barrier of fear. Some aspects of this election reminded me of Nicaragua. In Elbasan—exactly as in Masaya, near Managua, in 1984—one voting station I visited had a strange system of assigning numbers to voters, in an attempt to *intimidate them into voting for the Communists.*

Czechoslovakia came to mind as well, as I remembered that the Czech foreign minister, Jiri Dienstbier, had stepped into his job directly from his work as stoker. I met in Shkoder the local PD activist Pjetr Arbnori, who was a teacher of literature before his imprisonment in 1961 for trying to organize a social democratic party. After his release in August 1989 he was a carpenter. Since March 31 he has been a deputy for Shkoder.

Then there was Berisha. Berisha is a 46-year-old cardiologist born to a peasant family. He had served in the European Commission on Health Strategy in Copenhagen and now was an elected deputy in the Durres region. In a conversation in his office before the elections, he envisaged a Polish-style economic shock therapy for his country. Then the telephone rang. "BBC? Do I know you? Yes. Yes, I am listening. I have been listening every day for the last twenty years."

Or take Franko Kroqi, a mining engineer who held only one campaign rally and had to distribute photocopies of his diploma after the PPSH newspaper charged that he had never graduated. He actually beat Hoxha's hand-picked successor, Ramiz Alia, at the polls. Franko—excuse the familiarity, but after all those *raki* drinks and a four-hour-long political discussion, we felt like friends—seemed untouched by his coup. He had not yet been contacted by anyone from the electoral commission, let alone by the supreme leader he defeated. He received me in one of the two rooms of his apartment that serves also as kitchen and is crowded with beds for him, his wife, and their five children, aged 5 to 18.

My suggestion that now he might move to a bigger apartment, suitable for a deputy, made him start explaining that he did not run for that reason. The installation of a telephone seemed to him a remote dream. He had no idea whether he would be getting any additional money on top of the 910 lekas (about $30) a month he earns in the Institute for Mining Studies.

It is difficult to say when and if the dream of a democratic Albania will come true. The Communist Party (like all of its sisters) says that it is correcting mistakes

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of the past. When I asked the Politburo's Xhelil Gjoni what mechanisms would ensure that the mistakes will not be repeated, he answered simply that the Party will have to improve because it wants to keep the power. Does it ever. But many people will not vote for the Communists next time around because they have started to lose their fear. The Democratic Party is not ready for any compromises, not even entering a coalition. And in four years the adolescents whose main concern now is bumming chewing gum from foreigners will have grown into young adults who will vote what their hearts tell them, and not what the Party imposes.

ANNA HUSARSKA, a frequent contributor, is a correspondent for *Spotkania*, a new Polish newsweekly.

A report from Kurdistan.

LAST STAND

By Peter Galbraith

KURDISTAN

Dihok is a pleasant northern Iraqi city of 100,000, situated on the gently sloping sides of a valley and surrounded by mountains. On this Easter morning its people, mostly Kurds but also Christian Assyrians and Chaldeans, were fleeing. Since my arrival the previous evening, the city had been under continuous bombardment from Iraqi forces. After eight months of sanctions and two months of war, little gasoline remained in this oil-producing region of Iraq. So mostly the refugees walked—long lines of women, children, and armed men—streaming toward the relative safety of the high mountains north of the Zakho-Amadiyah Road. The few vehicles that did move were extraordinarily overburdened. Even the trunks of cars provided passage to one or two adults, or several children. It was a scene strikingly reminiscent of the photographs of the exodus from Paris just before the arrival of the Nazis.

I drove through the high mountain region that was to become the refugees' destination. With spring rains, the rocky Kurdish landscape was green, and there were wild flowers in the new grass. The almond trees in abandoned orchards were in bloom, and I stopped to photograph some newly arrived refugee children. On that sunny day at least some of the children seemed to enjoy the novelty of their new location. But in the mountains it gets cold at night. In the 1980s the Iraqi regime systematically dynamited or bulldozed every village in Kurdistan, and thus there were no shelters within miles. These urban refugees had only the food they could carry—not much for those who came by foot and only a little more for those who drove.

I had come to Dihok at the invitation of Jalal Talabani, the chairman of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and one of the two principal Kurdish leaders. He was deeply frustrated by the unwillingness of the Bush administration to talk to any Iraqi opposition figures. Obviously he also hoped the information I collected on the visit might influence Congress to support the anti-Saddam rebellion in northern and southern Iraq. As it turned out, my trip coincided with the collapse of the Kurdish insurgency and the beginning of a new humanitarian calamity.

I'd entered Iraq a day earlier under sporadic artillery fire, by crossing the Tigris River in a small boat from Syria. (Alone among the Kurds' neighbors, Syria permitted people and supplies to pass through its frontier to the rebels.) The next stop was Zakho. Just across the Khabur River from Turkey, Zakho was under the rule of the Kurdish guerrillas, the Peshmerga, literally "those who face death." The streets were crowded, shops open, and a sense of purposefulness and order prevailed. Loudspeakers played political messages, and slogans, some in imperfect English ("We librated Kurdistan"), adorned public buildings. The Peshmerga were using earth-moving equipment to tow abandoned Iraqi trucks to repair sheds. And they were attempting to rebuild a span on the bridge to Turkey (blown up by the departing Iraqis), in the hope of making an avenue for food, gasoline, and other commodities in desperately short supply. The Kurds had even restored electricity, something the Baath regime is still unable to do in Baghdad. Yet this picture of Zakho proved illusory. Two days later the city fell.

In Dihok I joined Talabani as he presided over a meeting of local notables. A large man who looked even larger in his baggy Peshmerga uniform, Talabani is a genuinely charismatic figure, and evidently a skilled politician. The gathering had the air of a lively town meeting, with much give and take between Talabani and his interlocutors. A former judge said the priority must be on restoring the courts. A teacher urged the execution of several citizens accused of passing on military information to the Iraqis. Talabani demurred, saying that a fair hearing was essential. An Assyrian raised the issue of religious minorities, and Talabani said that the protection of these rights is an integral part of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front program, which also includes Kurdish autonomy and support for a democratic Iraq.

The principal reason given for the administration's reluctance to support the Kurdish rebellion was a fear that the rebel agenda includes the breakup of Iraq. Yet to his own people in Dihok, Talabani said much the same thing that he had told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee a month before: "It is very difficult to change the borders of five countries. We are not for an independent Kurdistan; we are asking for our national rights within the framework of Iraq. I know of dreams and reality. All Kurds dream of an independent, uni-

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fied Kurdistan, but we have to face the reality."

Later Talabani and his top lieutenants adjourned to the home of an engineer, Lizginn Hamzani, where forty guests were served a lavish meal. Hamzani is one of the men who made the Kurdish revolution, and he did so because he thought he had the backing of President Bush. Until a month ago Hamzani was the commander of the National Defense Battalion of Dihok, an all-Kurdish light battalion financed by the Baghdad regime. Through this sinecure, he had grown quite wealthy and was able to build a solid stone house. Following Iraq's military collapse and the Shiite uprising in the south, Hamzani and his fellow officers saw an opportunity to join a cause in which he says he always believed. He assumed, as did all other Kurds with whom I spoke, that Bush's call on the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam would also mean U.S. backing for the rebellion. And with U.S. support, Hamzani figured, Saddam would surely fall. Nearly 300 Kurdish officers in various territorial units made the same calculation. The meal I shared with Hamzani in his fine stone house was surely the last he was able to eat there.

Heading from Dihok toward the relative safety of the mountain town of Amadiyah, we stopped at Saddam's hilltop palace, an opulent retreat with imported marble floors, enormous bathtubs, and fancy Italian fixtures. Two hundred acres, including a private lake, orchard, and vegetable patch, lie within a high concrete wall studded with numerous guard towers. From this palace we could see another on top of Gera Peak that is accessible only by helicopter or pack animal. Talabani told me these are just two of fifteen of Saddam's palaces within a fifty-kilometer radius. He never spends more than a day or two a year at each. But it will be a while before Saddam returns to this palace. The local people have smashed every window and every light.

What the refugees fleeing Kurdistan's cities fear most is the vengeance of the Iraqi army. In 1988, after the Iran-Iraq war ended, the Iraqi air force launched massive chemical weapon attacks on villages along the Iraq-Turkey border. The villages were adjacent to Peshmerga camps, but characteristically the regime did not attack the rebels. Instead it went after villages, where the terrifying impact of poison gas could be most effectively exploited. This year, with whole cities having joined the rebellion, it is frightening to contemplate the scale of the potential vengeance. I heard tales of massacres of entire neighborhoods as the army retook Kirkuk. Certainly the bombardment of Dihok was intended to maximize civilian casualties.

After the Baath regime destroyed the villages of Kurdistan, they moved the inhabitants to overcrowded new settlements that were under the eye of the army. They were called Victory Cities but were really concentration camps. One such settlement sits just outside Zakho. When I went there on Easter Sunday, the army was gone but so was the food. One man carried a bag of grain, treated for use as rat poison. This is all the inhabitants had left to eat, he said, and they were trying to wash the poison off the grain. The water supplies had also broken down, and the people were using a very polluted well. Even worse off than the city-dwellers, the inhabitants of the settlements have no food or transportation resources to get them to the mountain refuges. Unless help comes they will either be slaughtered or starve.

By late in the day we were back in Zakho, and the mood among my Kurdish companions had changed sharply. Clearly they were becoming aware of the extent of their military collapse. Dihok had fallen that morning and the shelling sounded close to Zakho. They decided to get me out to Syria as soon as possible, rather than waiting, as we had earlier agreed, to make the crossing under the cover of darkness. A young Kurd named Mohid was assigned to take me back to Syria. We drove out of Zakho along the Iraqi army road that parallels the Khabur River, which is the Turkish border. As we approached the Syrian border, we came under frequent artillery fire. With shells landing as close as fifteen yards away, I made a dash across the mudflats to a sandbagged position at the river's edge. From there a small boat took me to Syria. The next day the Iraqis seized the border crossing.

Some of my Kurdish companions are now in Turkey, as I have discovered from seeing them quoted in the Western press. But so far I have heard nothing about Talabani or Hamzani. And of course I'll never know what happened to the children playing on Easter Sunday among the mountain almond blossoms.

PETER GALBRAITH is a senior adviser to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Why Republicans love 'race-norming.'

NORMIN' STORMIN'

By Peter A. Brown

Republicans may have found a racial issue even more politically explosive than quotas, and one that could get them greater results at the ballot box. They want to ban the little-known but widespread practice of "race-norming"—in effect raising the test scores of black and Hispanic applicants over those of whites competing for the same job.

For the past decade the Public Employment Service, a federal-state program run through the U.S. Department of Labor and most of the various state employment services, has overseen the testing of more than 10 million candidates for mostly blue-collar and clerical

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jobs in private industry. In determining the results of the tests, the PES uses a sharp racial curve. No one knows for sure, but there is a widespread belief among testing and employment professionals that private companies that use their own tests to evaluate candidates also race-norm the results. One of the evaluation tests widely used by major corporations, the E. F. Wonderlic Personnel Test, even supplies conversion tables to implement a racial curve. What's more, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission confirms that last year it threatened to sue major companies that do not use a similar scoring system in their application tests. That EEOC policy is now under review.

The issue was a major topic in Bush administration deliberations about how to approach the debate over the 1991 Civil Rights Bill. Early drafts of the administration's bill contained a provision that would ban race-norming. At the last minute it was deleted from the bill, because Bush aides decided they did not want to give Democrats a chance to charge racial politics. But the administration's desire to end the practice is spelled out in a section-by-section analysis attached to the bill. The White House hopes that courts will read that analysis when they rule on relevant issues. And senior White House aides have told congressional Republicans they would be happy to see an amendment added to the bill that would ban race-norming.

Republican representatives and senators haven't been as timid as the White House. Senate Minority Whip Alan Simpson of Wyoming has introduced a bill to prohibit the practice, and Representative Henry Hyde of Illinois offered an amendment to the Democratic civil rights bill to do the same. "Race-norming denies equal opportunity very blatantly. It says some people are more equal than others," says Simpson. Hyde's proposal was rejected by the House Judiciary Committee on March 19 by a strict party-line vote, 21-13. The Senate has not yet taken up Simpson's bill.

Race-norming was devised toward the end of Jimmy Carter's administration to help increase black and Hispanic placement in private industry. Never voted on by Congress, the regulations were simply implemented by Labor Department bureaucrats after the normal hearing process, and ironically they took effect shortly after Ronald Reagan took office. Because blacks have typically scored much lower than whites, and Hispanics somewhat lower, on virtually all standardized tests, the curve is seen as the only way to prevent whites from disproportionately getting most jobs filled through this program. A 1989 National Research Council study found that in a case where 20 percent of white applicants are referred for jobs, without the racial curve only about 3 percent of blacks and Hispanics would be.

Most state employment services have used the General Aptitude Test Battery to evaluate candidates for job openings. Typically, private companies ask state employment services to recommend the best-qualified applicants when they have a job opening. Let's say XYZ Autobody is looking for an auto mechanic. The XYZ manager calls his local state employment service, which sends over a list of candidates. All potential candidates have taken the GATB, which is a multiple-choice exam that measures reading, math, vocabulary, spatial, perceptual, and dexterity skills.

Each test-taker is graded on how many questions he answers correctly, then his exam score is compared with the nationwide pool of applicants—of his race. If a white, a black, and a Hispanic apply for that mechanic's job and each gets the same raw score of 300 points on the GATB, the three will show widely different scores on the referral sent to the employer. The black would be listed as scoring 83 (meaning he was in the 83rd percentile of all black applicants), the Hispanic would get a 67, and the white would be given a 44. But the referral forms sent to the potential employer do not mention the applicants' races. Because the referral does not include the raw score, it might appear that the black applicant scored almost twice as high as the white applicant.

This process has been widely debated in academic circles but is rarely discussed in the real world. In fact, the day after the House Judiciary Committee vote on Hyde's amendment, neither *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, nor even the Associated Press carried a word about the race-norming vote or the issue in their stories on the civil rights bill. One reason may be that the subject is highly technical and unfamiliar to reporters covering the bill. Also, Hyde never used the word "race," and although he explained how the process worked, he did not provide an actual example of how greatly scores are adjusted.

Judiciary chairman Jack Brooks of Texas, who led the opposition to the amendment, called it a "thinly veiled attempt" to get Congress to delve into regulatory matters. Brooks said the amendment should be voted down because it had not been raised at any of the committee's hearings on the bill. None of the Democrats who voted against the Hyde amendment discussed the merits of the issue.

Civil rights advocates who support the racial curve say the tests are culturally biased toward whites. But the fact that Asians do so well that they are scored as though they are white calls that argument into question. In addition, the 1989 NRC study of the GATB found it was not biased against blacks: it accurately predicted job performance using scores before they were adjusted for race.

Many employers, especially personnel departments, like the current system because it allows them to meet the numerical racial goals of the U.S. Office of Federal Contract Compliance. Companies that don't do so risk losing federal contracts. As EEOC vice chairman Ricky Silberman puts it: "The practice of race-norming is the oil which greases the quota engine which drives the employment policy today under guise of government-required contract compliance." The state employment agencies love the system because

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without the GATB they would have to devise their own tests, and decide whether to race-norm the results or take political heat for having a work force that does not mirror the racial composition of the local labor pool.

Democrats are scared silly by the issue. Polls show that whites—85 percent of the national electorate—overwhelmingly oppose anything they perceive as special treatment for minorities. A poll by Market Opinion Research, a GOP polling firm, taken March 20-23 found that by a 77 to 16 percent margin voters disapproved of race-norming, even when told supporters justify the system as necessary to compensate for biased tests against blacks and Hispanics. "The present system is indefensible from a political standpoint," says Brian Lunde, former executive director of the Democratic National Committee. Lunde now earns his living running campaigns for moderate Democrats, many of them in the South. He calls race-norming "a no-win situation for the Democratic Party." Well before the party-line Judiciary Committee vote, Lunde predicted his party would try to protect the status quo, even though he says "opposing changing the current policy on this issue would be political suicide" if it ever becomes a major topic of debate.

And that is exactly what the Republicans have in mind.

PETER A. BROWN is author of the forthcoming book *Minority Party: Why Democrats Face Defeat in 1992 and Beyond* (Regnery Gateway Inc.).

A Soviet historian goes home.

PAST TENSE

By Aleksandr M. Nekrich

Mikhail Gorbachev has learned that using history as an instrument of vital policy is a delicate and dangerous affair. His initial calculation, it seems, was that he could renew and extend Nikita Khrushchev's earlier criticism of the dark sides of the past, but still in a controlled way, and that he could limit the extent of the historical scrutiny. Today that hope is gone. Far from buttressing Gorbachev's process of controlled reform, this peeling back of the layers of history has revealed more of the horror of the system Gorbachev still represents. History has fueled the movement for radical democratization and further poisoned anything tainted with the word "Communist."

I had my own reckoning with this process. At the suggestion of Andrei Sakharov, I went to Moscow last year after a thirteen-year hiatus to do some research on Soviet public opinion in the pre-War years. I am a historian and am particularly concerned with the brief period of Soviet-German friendship from 1939 to 1941. In the bowels of the libraries, my own personal peeling back of the layers began. I became acquainted with the archives of several government and Party leaders of that time, and with the transcripts of Party conferences. Suddenly I came across *Mein Kampf*, published in Russian, without date, place, or publisher, containing comments by an anonymous reader. Or perhaps not so anonymous. This copy belonged to Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin—"the village elder of the nation," as he was usually called in the Soviet Union. Kalinin was the chairman of the Soviet Central Executive Committee from 1922 to 1946, the "president" of the USSR.

Kalinin's handwritten review is on the first page of the Third Reich's bible: "Wordy, without real content, but petty shopkeepers and philistines will love it, and it should prove invaluable to the representatives of finance capital." One could laugh at these simplistic views of a "peasant-type" such as Kalinin. However, I found a generally similar appraisal in the personal archives of Andrei Zhdanov, one of the leading Party intellectuals and a member of Stalin's Politburo from 1939 to 1948.

Looking through Zhdanov's archive, I noticed a fairly extensive letter from one V. P. Zolotov, member of the All-Union Communist Party since 1928. It was sent to Vyacheslav Molotov and to Zhdanov. What Zhdanov considered Zolotov's more essential thoughts were marked and singled out. These are the main ones: "We must always keep in mind precisely and clearly *that our main, fundamental enemy in Europe and in the whole world is not Germany, but England.*" And further: "We must finally understand that the most acute differences in government ideologies by no means *preordain a similarly acute antagonism of political and economic interests.*" Zolotov's letter was written in direct connection with the Soviet Union's summer 1939 negotiations with England and France on an alliance directed against Germany. "Entering into an agreement with England and France against Germany, even concluding a military alliance with them, we should not forget for one moment that in this alliance England, and France with her, will carry on a policy of insincerity, provocation, and betrayal with respect to us," cautioned the letter's author.

Zolotov thought that the primary task of Soviet foreign policy should be to "lure Germany into war against England," and therefore he proposed carrying out Soviet foreign policy along the following lines:

1. Strengthen the military might of the Soviet Union so that the German Military Command will see no value in war.
2. Inflame the Nazis' anti-British tendencies by all possible means.
3. Give broad support to anti-German agitation and propaganda in all democratic countries.

And, most important of all (here Zhdanov underlined Zolotov's words with a thick line): "... in the event of war between Germany and France and En-

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gland, promise Germany that we will maintain neutrality, facilitate the protection of her rear guard, while through concentration of the Red Army on our Western border, paralyze the possibility of Poland entering the war on England's side."

This plan of Soviet foreign policy comes quite close to the actual course chosen by Stalin. Zolotov's idea—that in the end all capitalist groupings will become exhausted fighting each other, and at this moment the "USSR will throw the sword of the Red Army on the scales of history"—is nothing other than an intended or unintended repetition of the "Stalin doctrine," formulated as early as 1925 but published only two years after the end of the Second World War, in 1947. That doctrine proclaimed: "Our banner remains, as before, the banner of peace. But if war begins, then we will not sit with our hands folded—we will have to act, but act last. And we will act in order to throw the decisive weight on the scales, *a weight*, which could tip the balance."

Following this doctrine, Zhdanov and Kalinin in their unpublished speeches of 1940-41 argued that the Soviet Union should use the opportunities brought about by the war in Europe to expand its territory quickly and at low cost. There are, of course, different interpretations about the beginning of the Soviet-German war in June 1941. However, until recently most historians believed that Stalin did not intend to fight in 1941—there were no allies, and for that matter the plans of the Soviet military industry anticipated being able to mass produce and deploy new types of weapons only in 1942 and even 1943. For example, we now know from some publications of archival documents that on June 4, 1941, the Politburo passed a resolution on the formation of military units for specially fortified regions then being built. The first line, for 45,000 people, was supposed to have been finished by June 1, 1941, the second, for 75,000 people, by October 1, 1941. The resolution proposed maintaining permanent garrisons in the fortified regions, consisting of 70 percent of the wartime capacity in the case of the first line, and 30 percent in the case of the second. The entire program of military shipbuilding, if we may judge by the plan for 1941, was to have been completed only in 1942-43, etc. But at the same time, work on the military program intensified sharply in 1941. The goal—increasing the numerical strength of the army to 200 divisions—was set.

Most of us dimly believed these things to be true, but to know them to be true is a different experience. To uncover them in the archives is more liberating yet. It is impossible to understand the current events in the Soviet Union without understanding this dynamic of historical revelation.

Let me provide a more collective example. Stalin's program of farm collectivization is now etched into the public consciousness. It was reintroduced into Soviet public and scholarly discussion primarily by the British historian Robert Conquest in his book *Harvest of Sorrow*, published in the West in 1986, and in the Soviet journal *Novy Mir* in 1989. Conquest's point—that the famine in the Ukraine in 1932-33 had actually been organized by the Soviet government—was later to be fully confirmed by Ukrainian officials. Nearly 500 documents came to light detailing the 1932-33 Ukrainian famine and are now being prepared for publication by a special investigative commission.

These documents show that both Moscow and the leadership of the Ukraine were fully informed of the incipient famine, yet continued to demand the fulfillment of grain procurement norms. The unfortunate peasants and kolkhoz (collective farm) workers who failed to comply were proclaimed saboteurs and counterrevolutionaries. In one of the documents, signed by Ukrainian Party officials on December 6, 1932, instructions were given to halt the transport of goods to locales "not fulfilling" the grain procurement norms, to halt all government and cooperative trade, and to forbid trade with either kolkhoz workers or individual peasant farmers. Likewise all credit was stopped and debtors "punished" ahead of schedule. According to the Ukrainian scholar C. B. Kulchitsky, 4 million starved to death in the Ukraine in 1932-33 alone.

As the records revealed the existence of victims, so did the ground. Terror victims and executed people buried in Moscow, Byelorussia, the Ukraine, Lithuania, Vorkuta, and the Cheliabinsk region were unearthed. Something incredible happened: the history of the past not only began to affect the politics of perestroika, but forcefully invaded its territory. A bitter polemic arose between official historians, primarily those specializing in the history of the Communist Party, and professional independent historians. The scholar Yuri Afanasyev, one of the leaders of the democratic movement in the USSR, declared that the written history of the USSR was a complete falsification. The "Memorial" society was founded; it became the center of activity in the filling in of the "blanks" of Soviet history.

The search for blanks cannot be confined to a particular time frame. The entire history of Communist rule, including the era of Lenin, has come increasingly under skeptical examination. It is impossible to understand the current popular distrust of Gorbachev without seeing this in its proper historical context. An opinion poll conducted in July 1990, in which 1,486 Soviet citizens from twenty-four localities in twelve different regions of the country participated, revealed the majority's disagreement with Gorbachev's point of view. To the question: "Do you agree that the CPSU should bear responsibility for all its mistakes throughout the seventy years of Soviet power?" 74 percent of the respondents answered affirmatively, and only 15 percent negatively. That judgment is perhaps the most telling fact of Soviet politics today.

ALEKSANDR M. NEKRICH is senior research fellow at the Russian Research Center, Harvard University. His memoirs, *Forsake Fear*, have just been published by Unwin Hyman.

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The return of China's democrats.

YEAR OF THE PHOENIX

By Steven W. Mosher

As the last two dissident leaders begin thirteen-year sentences for their roles in the Tiananmen Square rallies, the crackdown on China's pro-democracy movement would seem to be complete. Think again. Democratic stirrings are stronger than ever—and not just among students and intellectuals. The People's Liberation Army is racked with dissension over its forced participation in the Tiananmen massacre. Profound disagreements between hardline Marxists and reformers have paralyzed the Party and government. The provinces are going their own way. The aging Marxists at the helm in Beijing are *not* China's future—a fact that has escaped our China policy-makers.

Many in the West don't realize that it took the PLA four days to pacify Beijing after its massacre of thousands of peaceful demonstrators in June 1989. Out of sight of Western correspondents, groups of workers armed themselves with Molotov cocktails and captured AK-47s and fought back. Some 3,500 officers in the PLA, including political commissars, were said to have later come under investigation for sympathizing with the demands of the students. Last September a poster criticizing the PLA leadership turned up on the campus of a Beijing military academy. Reliable reports say that disillusioned officers in Beijing and other cities now run a pro-Zhao Ziyang underground, whose goal is to restore the deposed Communist Party reformer to power. In the words of the *Liberation Army Daily*, the PLA's house organ, "Some soldiers . . . have become doubtful of the leadership of the Communist Party and the superiority of the socialist system."

China's leaders are clearly worried. Senior commanders and political commissars of China's seven military regions have been reshuffled, and their troops are receiving up to six hours a day of Marxist-Leninist indoctrination. But a stiff dose of revolutionary cant administered by a few aging Maoists can scarcely undo a decade of military modernization, or abolish an officer cadre concerned less with class struggle than with a credible national defense. The Gulf war was a stunning demonstration of the importance of advanced technology in modern war and has strengthened PLA support for economic reform. In future conflicts with the people—or the provincial governments—over the pace of reform, Beijing will think long and hard before calling in an army whose loyalty to central planning and Party precepts is shaky.

Within the government and Party too, there are increasing rumors of dissent. In response, the elderly oligarchs have not only imprisoned their intellectual and student critics, they have enrolled the entire bureaucracy in a refresher course in Communist first principles. In a practice harking back to the Cultural Revolution, every government bureau, state-owned factory, and Party branch office in the country is required to spend two afternoons a week studying the latest Party directive or *People's Daily* editorial.

Yet this propaganda about the splendors of communism, hurriedly intoned by junior functionaries themselves alienated from the regime, arouses mostly contempt, especially among the young and middle-aged. According to pro-democracy activists in the United States, the classes are places where complaints about official corruption and economic mismanagement mix with the latest gossip about the waning health and waxing Swiss bank accounts of their sickly leaders. "The sessions provide an opportunity for millions of men and women to meet openly and discuss their desire to change China's political and economic system," Chinese dissident Lin Changsheng told me.

But democracy in China is by far the most advanced in its provinces. Almost a decade ago the central government began dismantling its machinery for socialist central planning and taxation, granting to provincial authorities sweeping powers over revenue collection and economic policy-making. A financial contract system was established, under which local governments and companies were allowed to keep profits after fulfilling their obligation to the government. With Beijing's tacit encouragement, the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian abandoned all but the pretense of Marxism for a commercial revolution that has transformed the coastal south into a 250,000-square-mile joint venture with Hong Kong and the West. Other provinces gradually followed suit. By 1989, according to the state-owned *Information Daily*, the provinces were remitting only 47 percent of total tax revenues to Beijing and keeping the rest.

In trying economic before political reform, China naively hoped to keep its political structures intact. But the shift of economic power to the provinces now threatens to tear these structures apart. The unofficial leader of the new Chinese federalism is Ye Xuanping, until recently the governor of Guangdong province. As the son of Marshal Ye Jianying, one of the PRC's founding fathers, and the longtime leader of China's most prosperous province (outside of Taiwan), the younger Ye has developed a reputation and power base rivaling those of the national leaders. Guangdong, along with neighboring Fujian, ignored Deng Xiaoping's order in May 1989 to dispatch garrison troops to Beijing to help suppress the pro-democracy movement. And Guangdong as well as a number of other provinces have failed to implement the post-Tiananmen national austerity

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measures such as tightening up credit to privately owned enterprises.

The differences Governor Ye and his colleagues have had with the central government came to a head over the issue of China's eighth five-year plan. The original draft of this plan, along with a more general ten-year plan for 1991-2000, was a product of Beijing's central ministries. Not surprising, they were blueprints for recentralization, calling for the restoration of a "socialist planned commodity economy," mandating quotas for the production of various goods, and circumscribing the authority of the provinces to approve investment projects and sequester tax revenues.

In September 1990 Premier Li Peng summoned China's thirty provincial governors to the capital to put their seal of approval on these plans. In the past this step had been a mere formality, but now the governors, led by Governor Ye, denounced the proposed economic policy as an attempt to reverse the economic reforms of the past decade. Two months later Li tried again, at a secret meeting of provincial leaders in Beijing. Again the local leaders rebelled. At this point Beijing seems to have abandoned its efforts to bring the provincial leaders around. Instead the government's plans were submitted directly to a plenary session of the Communist Party's Central Committee, where representatives of the center and the provinces would be in rough numerical parity. This meeting was convened in late December, and by all accounts was no less fractious than the previous ones: partisans of the center and periphery sat on opposite sides of the room and shouted at one another.

The compromise five- and ten-year plans that were finally cobbled together are written in doublespeak—a sign of the continuing dissension. They call for a market-based system within a socialist planned economy, whatever that is. The policy statement insists that any shift to capitalism will not be tolerated and yet redefines the "fundamental task of socialism" as the "development of the social productive forces." Translation: free market forces in the provinces are too powerful to be purged.

One thing at least is clear: the plans as published are a victory for the provinces. The efforts in earlier drafts to restore a command economy have come to nothing. The provinces will continue to move in the direction of free markets rather than follow Beijing-dictated plans. "Mandatory plans will be reduced," the documents assert. "Routine production and operations of enterprises . . . should be left to market regulation." And in recent weeks the speeches of Li Peng and Party chief Jiang Zemin have been more moderate in tone, indicating a willingness to tolerate the existing dispersal of power.

There are compelling reasons why the United States should encourage this incipient federalism. Of all the scenarios for political reform in China—civil war among various Party and army factions, a military coup d'état, the collapse of central authority, a popular uprising—a slow seepage of power to the provinces is the only one that doesn't involve the risk of a bloodbath. As in the Soviet Union, where the republics are leading the way to reform, devolution of power also has the advantage of being well under way.

How could the United States help? One option is to beef up its consular staffs in China's provincial capitals, forging a working relationship with the leadership cadre of the future. We should also re-establish contacts with reform-minded members of the PLA and keep up our support for the most autonomous Chinese regions of all—Taiwan and Hong Kong.

And there's no reason to keep cozying up to Beijing's dictators. Our best leverage here is China's huge stake in American markets. Since Tiananmen Square, China has behaved in classic mercantilist fashion, building up huge trade surpluses with the United States by blocking imports and pushing exports. The Beijing authorities have restricted the entry of U.S.-made goods through central planning, administrative quotas, and foreign exchange controls. At the same time, China's export drive to America's relatively open markets has paid handsome dividends. Exports to America increased $4.5 billion in 1990 alone, aided by most-favored-nation status, which keeps China's tariffs as low as those enjoyed by England and France. China's growing trade surplus with the United States reached $11 billion last year, and is predicted to be second only to Japan's in 1991.

Congressional concern over unfair Chinese trade practices, combined with continued irritation over human rights abuses, is likely to produce veto-proof majorities in favor of abolishing China's most-favored-nation treatment. We should set clear conditions for continuing the Chinese trade relationship. In addition to releasing all political prisoners, China would have to end martial law in Tibet and free the monks and others imprisoned for advocating Tibetan independence; end the ban on study abroad for students and scholars and halt the harassment of those living in the United States.

For the moment, this sort of liberalization is unlikely. But China may shed its Communist trappings sooner than we think. Marxist economic guru Chen Yun is a shaky 86, shadowy hard-liner Wang Zhen is 82, and Deng Xiaoping himself is an infirm and increasingly incoherent 83. This coterie of doddering gerontocrats—called by irreverent Chinese the Politburo Sitting Committee—will not long survive. The movement for democracy is still young and, in spirit, undiminished.

STEVEN W. MOSHER, director of Asian studies at the Claremont Institute, is the author of *China Misperceived: American Illusions and Chinese Reality* (New Republic Books).

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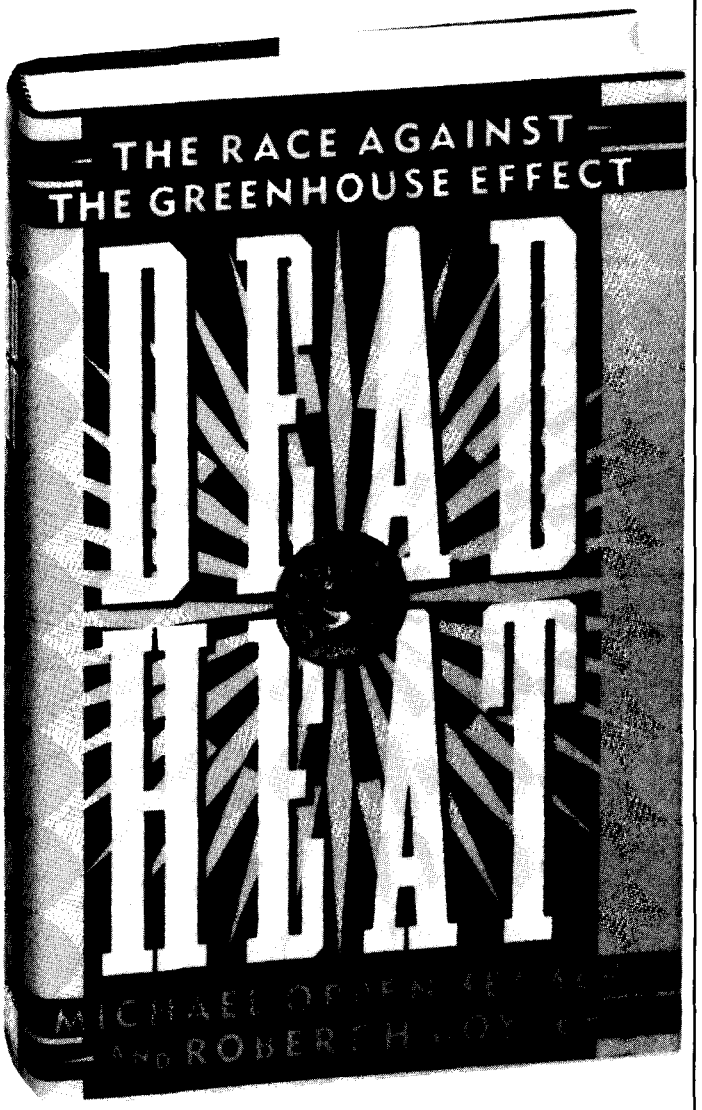

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The case for re-intervention in Iraq.

THE BITTER END

By Albert Wohlstetter and Fred Hoffman

The United States and other members of the coalition, having intervened so massively in Iraq, have an obvious moral obligation to see to it that ethnic and religious minorities and the Shiite majority there have some protection against the deadly revenge of the Baath government. State Department and White House spokesmen, in a hopeless attempt to cover the obvious, have been emitting a dense fog of statements justifying first the vacillation and then the reversal of policy on using force to prevent the Republican Guards from training their helicopter gunships, artillery, and other heavy equipment on innocent Iraqis.

They continue to blur easily documented truths: that the president and the U.N. announced aims beyond the retaking of Kuwait, that the U.N. specifically authorized the use of force to implement *all* of its resolutions on Iraq, and that near the very outset of the war, the president plainly said the fighting wouldn't end when we got Saddam out of Kuwait—it would go on until Iraq's cooperation on all of the resolutions was assured. Members of the administration seem unaware that the disastrous direction in policy since the rout of the Iraqi army greatly reduces any chance that we can bring about substantial improvements in the protection of our interests and those of our partners in the region.

A key illusion held by the administration is that the war now being waged in Iraq is an "internal affair" that does not affect our interests or the interests of stability in the region. Yet the chronic disorder and factions in the Near East and Persian Gulf have their roots precisely in the internal violence of regimes there: their use of terror to suppress advocates of conciliation and all reports of violations in the letter or spirit of agreements, the absence of any internal check on the ambition of leaders, and the widespread use of schoolchildren and women as targets and shields. It is naive to suppose that the many arms control arrangements, border adjustments, and sanctions we have in mind can be sustained and would operate effectively without substantial changes in many "internal affairs."

ALBERT WOHLSTETTER is president of Pan Heuristics. FRED HOFFMAN conducts research on national security and energy policy.

Last week's U.N. Resolution 687 on the cease-fire in the Gulf, to take one example, "decides" that "Iraq shall unconditionally undertake not to use, develop, construct or acquire . . . all chemical and biological weapons and all stocks of agents; and all related subsystems and components and all research, development, support, and manufacturing facilities" useful for acquiring components and subsystems of such weapons. For this even to appear to be a serious undertaking would require a permanent and continuous intervention in the internal affairs of an Iraqi government far more extensive than a one-time U.N. supervision of an election arranged by a provisional government. Enforcing such an undertaking by a totalitarian dictatorship is essentially infeasible. Arms control in this area, if feasible, can only occur in a society in which the government can't stop individuals from telling the outside world what's happening.

U.N. Resolution 688, to take another example, condemns Iraq's handling of the rebels and was approved 10-3 by the Security Council including the U.S. representative. It should finally put to rest the U.S. claim that we can't stop the mass killings in Iraq because they are an "internal affair." U.N. 688, over Iraq's protest, states that the mass killings are not an internal matter: they threaten "international peace and security."

The president had remarkably thoughtful aides but deserves the principal credit for the skill with which Desert Storm was prepared and pursued. He deserves this not least for explicitly recognizing, in the course of the muddled debate that followed the invasion, what most of his critics never seemed to grasp: that we had more than one reason and more than one aim in responding forcefully, and that these reasons were mutually reinforcing. It seems incredible that he should now forget what he achieved in leading the U.N. Security Council to authorize the use of force—"all necessary means"—for aims beyond getting Iraq out of Kuwait; and that he should now let the dogma that encouraged Iraq's invasions of Iran and Kuwait—that we need an Iraqi dictator to balance Iran and Syria—cloud everything that he accomplished and wants to achieve.

The president himself intended Desert Storm to serve some longer-term and broader aims beyond the operation's immediate goal—embodied in U.N. Reso-

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lution 660—of getting Iraq out of Kuwait. Six days before the U.N.'s January 15 deadline for Saddam to accept all its resolutions, the president said, "I am more determined than ever that the United Nations' resolutions, including 678, be implemented fully." U.N. 678 authorized the continuing force after Iraq left Kuwait, i.e., "to use all necessary means to uphold and implement Security Council resolution 660 (1990) and *all subsequent* relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area" (my italics).

Thirty-seven hours into Operation Desert Storm and the liberation of Kuwait, the president said the liberation of Kuwait "would not end the fighting." We would then seek compliance with all the U.N. resolutions. The fighting "isn't going to end short of the total fulfillment of our objectives." General Norman Schwarzkopf, in his now famous strategy briefing during the last hours of the operation, said:

> . . . There's a lot more purpose of this war than just get the Iraqis out of Kuwait [sic]. The purpose of this war was to enforce the resolutions of the United Nations. There are some twelve different resolutions of the United Nations, not all of which have been accepted by Iraq to date. . . .

Moreover, at the outset of Desert Storm, the general reflected the president's view that we would make some sacrifice in overcoming Iraq's powerful military machine because we wanted to "minimize any harm done to innocent civilians." While the president was saying that at a news conference in Washington, the general was saying the same thing in his briefing in Riyadh: "We are doing absolutely everything we possibly can in this campaign to avoid injuring or hurting or destroying innocent people."

The president's decision was right, but also prudent. The myth that we must destroy a country in order to save it paralyzes policy. In Desert Storm, we concentrated, with imperfect but widespread success, on highly accurate, discriminating weapons against military targets, exploiting a cumulative revolution in information technology. Saddam's arsenal, in contrast, was primarily rooted in weapons of mass destruction. We wanted to destroy the Iraqi army as an organized force. Saddam wanted us to destroy Iraqi innocents. He used them as shields at strategic installations because he believed our destroying innocents would cost us essential domestic and coalition support. Killing Iraqi innocents doesn't bother him. He's been doing it himself for years. For us to kill them would blur a defining difference, which we should never lose sight of, between us and him, and his likes.

The revolution in technology made it feasible in Desert Storm to be discriminate. A strong focus on isolating and destroying Saddam's army in and near Kuwait fit well with reducing our killing of Iraqi civilians. With Desert Storm over, we can still discriminate. Using air power selectively now to stop the Republican Guards from killing Iraqi civilians fits very well with our longer-term aim for a stable balance of power in the region.

The president said he wanted to "leave it to the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people" to take care of Saddam. He failed to make the distinction between the Republican Guards (which acts as praetorian guard for Saddam and his Baath thugs) and the regular army (at which the Guard pointed its guns to enforce the army's role as cannon fodder). Yet it is the rebels in the regular army joining forces with the Iraqi resistance who might help bring about some necessary political change in Iraq.

Only a very murky, fantasy realpolitik suggests that the brutal Baath dictatorship, and only it or its murderous Republican Guards, can keep Iraq together as a peaceful "balance" to the power of fundamentalist Iran or Syria. No regional balance will be stable without the West's involvement. Any Baath regime would be not only a potential aggressor but also a continuing major opponent of any Western intervention on behalf of the weaker powers. The same vague delusionary realpolitik about a Baath Iraq seems to be the source of the embarrassing indecisiveness of the last two weeks. The president's instincts to stop the slaughter by Baath thugs would better serve his desire for a stable peace in the area.

In any case, we can't avoid intervening. The president already broadcast worldwide his invitation to the Iraqi dissidents: "[T]he Iraqi military and the Iraqi people [should] take matters into their own hands to force Saddam Hussein the dictator to step aside." We were intervening massively in Iraq's "internal affairs" when we destroyed much of an Iraqi army, whose main function since Iraq gained independence in 1932 has been the repression of Iraqi civilians. And we intervened massively in Iraq's internal affairs when we targeted so large a proportion of our air sorties against Iraqi industry.

The intent of coalition leaders was to avoid killing civilians, and, on the whole, they conducted the campaign with unprecedented care. Some normally quite accurate weapons inevitably went astray. Some targets were mislocated. The choice by the strategic intelligence and target selection bureaucracy of some industrial targets such as electric power, which affects sewage and water distribution for Iraqi civilians, was questionable. And the repeated strategic bombing of second- and third-order industrial targets in Iraqi cities, in contrast to the use of air power to isolate and destroy Iraqi ground divisions in the Kuwaiti theater of operations, disrupted essential human services as well as political control. If we want medical aid and food restored for civilians, and if we want those civilians to survive assaults and eventually achieve some measure of self-rule and freedom from a tyranny that has been lethal to the outside world as well as to Iraqis, they'll need some help. We'll have to force the Baath government to refrain from its normal practice of slaughtering civilians.

At the end of February, if we had continued the fighting to achieve all our objectives as the president had said we would on January 18, it would not have

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taken much force. Not with the Iraqi air defense network destroyed. It would have meant continuing for only a few days the rapid destruction of artillery, tanks, and warplanes, continuing a rout that many called an unfairly riskless and inhumane "turkey shoot." They called it that before they understood that these "turkeys" were deadly and intended to slaughter defenseless civilians. Those who now blame the United States for deaths of Republican Guards, civilians the Guards murder, and civilians we tried not to kill are themselves indiscriminate. If the coalition continues fighting, it could have clear-cut aims to complete the rapid rout of a defeated regular military force. Very different from guerrillas under dense jungle canopies. Or a Lebanese terrorist driving a truck loaded with explosives against a U.S. Embassy standing as a permanent target. The Vietnam and Lebanon "quagmires" that those who opposed Desert Storm conjured up near its start, to assure us, by analogy, that Desert Storm would take years and pile up tens of thousands of casualties, turned out to exist mainly in their heads. The analogies should look even more irrelevant after Desert Storm. Desert Storm went more rapidly than even the coalition expected, in part because they underestimated the latent resentment and rebelliousness of the ordinary Iraqi soldier and his readiness to surrender, defect, or turn on his Baath and Republican Guard tormentors.

In the administration's search for another military or Baath party dictator it continues to overestimate the amount of force required to even the odds for the resistance. Even now it will not take a great deal of force. Nothing like restarting a ground war. Nor anything like the full-scale air campaign. The coalition has been flying combat air patrols unopposed over north and south Iraq. AWACS surveillance aircraft can detect and identify any Iraqi fighters or helicopter gunships in violation of the truce and can guide patrolling aircraft to intercept them. With tanker aircraft over Iraq to refuel tactical reconnaissance as well as combat planes, we can spot, and use precision weapons to destroy on the ground, Iraqi warplanes and artillery used in violation of the truce. We can airdrop communications equipment that enables the resistance to coordinate their actions and to stay in touch with the outside world. And we can surely deliver medical supplies, food, and other humanitarian aid directly to civilians in territory held by the resistance and to resistance fighters whom the Baath government is starving out.

The last is the most obviously urgent and also the most risky of the above measures. It involves exposing big, vulnerable air cargo planes and their crews flying low and slow over the delivery areas to the large numbers of shoulder-fired missiles and machine guns in the hands of infantry. Yet in a belated reversal of policy, the U.S. government announced that it will fly C-130 cargo planes from Turkish air bases, to make air drops of humanitarian aid to the Kurdish resistance. We have warned the Iraqi government not to interfere, and the Pentagon has declared that we will fly combat air patrols with jet fighters as cover for the C-130s. There is a substantial chance that some of the very large number of Iraqi infantrymen who have hand-held and shoulder-fired weapons will use them to bring down a cargo plane and its crew. This amounts to a reversal by the president of his statement that he will not risk the precious life of even one American soldier in the current civil war.

But if we can undertake this risky mission to bring aid to those who have been subjected to mass killing and maiming, why can't we undertake less risky missions in order to reduce drastically the gunships, the artillery, and the like that are doing the maiming? The U.N. coalition has more than enough means to even or reverse the present odds. But serious signals of our intentions have to be clearly made through the clouded media of the press and TV. Signals of our intent have been far too mixed ever to make clear that we really did want Saddam to stop slaughtering Iraqi citizens and to let them pick their leaders. The signals have baffled the press. And maybe Saddam. Saddam simply ignored warnings not to use helicopter gunships. If Iraqi Kurds, Shiites, and ordinary soldiers misunderstood our intention when we said "the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people should take matters into their own hands," it would be absurd now to make the issue trivial, like deconstructivist literary *explication de texte*. We have an obligation to make such momentous signals clear.

If we are unwilling now to use a minimal amount of force out of the vast air power that still gives us air supremacy in Iraq, how likely are we to use force in the future when we will have neither the power in place, nor as heartrending a cause, nor as urgent an obligation, nor as unified a coalition and domestic support? In the days after victory, public support for continuing the fight to oust Saddam was high. As the genocide grew, Arab members of the coalition—for example, Kuwait and Egypt—were urging "all necessary means" to stop the annihilation by the Republican Guards. While we held back, France and Turkey took the lead in pressing for U.N. condemnation of the Iraqi government's war on the Iraqi people. And British Prime Minister John Major, urged by Mrs. Thatcher, preceded us in announcing plans to send humanitarian aid directly to the resistance. The U.S. government, which led the way into Desert Storm, cannot plausibly attribute its delayed response to its coalition partners.

On the whole, it might be better for government spokesmen to replace the embarrassing noise they have substituted for explanation with total silence. But better still, the administration should think through the implications of our current actions for the longer run in the Gulf and in the Near East. And cast a cold eye on the uncritical assumption underlying its indecision: the view of our diplomats, persisting since the fall of the Shah, that an Iraqi dictatorship would be a lesser evil and the only real alternative to fundamentalist fanatics or the "Lebanonization" of Iraq.

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Lebanon is not a convincing analogy. Much of the factional strife there is the heritage of French attempts to preserve the dominance of the Maronites, as demographic trends increased the numbers of Muslims, especially poor Shiite Muslims, and as the Palestinians, excluded from political participation by almost all Arab states as well as by Israel, multiplied in camps like Shatila. What serious parallel is there in Lebanon to Iraq, where a few members of the Sunni Arab minority, making up perhaps one-fifth of the population, preside over a Shiite majority that is mainly in the south, where it competes very little with the Kurds in the northern province of Mosul who form a minority about as large as that of the Sunni Arabs? The Shiites in the south and the Kurds in the north oppose their Baath oppressors. The Kurdish opposition has indicated that it is seeking greater cultural autonomy in a federal structure in Iraq. President Ozal of Turkey has accepted the idea of cultural autonomy in a federal Iraq and is increasing the cultural autonomy of Kurds in Turkey. The Shiite Arabs in the south during the Iraq-Iran war did not respond to Khomeini's appeal to join forces with the Iranian Shiites any more than Arabs in Khuzistan answered Saddam's call to join Shiite Arabs in southern Iraq.

Why is it against the interests of the West for Iraqis to vote on such a loose federal structure? What magic does our own Arabist establishment see in an Iraq unified and dominated by dictatorship of a few members of the Sunni Arab minority? Yet in many background briefings anonymous officials have been telling reporters that "all-out military efforts to assist anti-Hussein forces may not serve our long-term interests." They may "make Iran dominant in the Gulf." We need the present dictatorship for the balance of power. Of course, Saddam himself is a bit hard to swallow. So the talk is of a Republican Guard general or a Baath Party without Saddam. It's doubtful that we know how to arrange that. Trying to do so would be not only meddling in the internal affairs of Iraq, but micromanaging the selection of personnel in the party or the army.

This bipartisan view of the importance of a Baath Iraq for regional stability has long held sway. In April 1980 Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser, on PBS's "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," responded to many broad Iraqi hints that they could take care of our Iranian problem, and sent two nominally separate but deliberately and ominously juxtaposed messages: "We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the U.S. and Iraq," and "I make two separate propositions: one that we do not wish to continue the anomalous state of U.S.-Iraqi relations, though ... the road towards improvement is a long one. Secondly, the Iranians themselves ought to consider the potential consequences for Iran of Iran's continued isolation." Four months later, Baath Iraq invaded Iran. That did not bring about a stable balance of power.

When the Iraq-Iran war ended in 1988, many Western Arabists, including our own diplomats and some key figures in the Reagan and Bush State Departments, held that Baath Iraq, weakened by that war, had shifted permanently toward moderation, cooperation with neighbors like Kuwait, the building of its civilian economy, and avoidance of foreign adventures. It's no wonder they were surprised in August 1990. Their continuing preference in the current civil war for the Baath party over the present opposition may be preparing future shocks.

There is no reason to believe that preserving the Baath dictatorship or a military substitute is the only way or the best way or any way at all to keep Iraq whole. And there is plenty of reason to believe that if the Baath government does survive and is in charge of Iraq and its oil revenues, Baath Iraq will not remain weak. It will use its oil reserves to revive its strength and its menace to the neighborhood. Supporting a Baath tyranny strong enough to avoid "Lebanonization" but too weak to threaten the stability of the region would be like trying to walk a tightrope in a hurricane—in the wrong direction.

Even if we don't help the resistance, the Baath government might lose control in one place or another. Then the chance of dismemberment by the outside parties who have supported various opposition groups while we stood idly by is greater. But if we take a forthright stance against outside parties dismembering Iraq and in favor of letting the Iraqis vote on their own future, including their own future leaders, the threat of Lebanonization is likely to be quite small.

Neither the United States nor the U.N. has made a change of government in Iraq an explicit "formal war aim." Secretary Baker is right about that. However, both the United States and the U.N. have made formal demands on Iraq that cannot be fulfilled unless there is an Iraqi government whose agreement to comply is credible. If the formal demands are serious, they entail such a change. The president understands that. Time and again he's made clear that he can't conceive of negotiating in the future with the present Iraqi government. He's said that Saddam's "credibility is zero, zilch, zed."

"Leaving it to the Iraqis" does not mean staying neutral in the uneven military struggle between a Baath tyranny armed with jet fighters, helicopter gunships, tanks, and artillery and the spontaneous, poorly equipped, diverse but widespread opposition. Nor does it mean that the only alternative to staying neutral or siding with the Baath dictators is for us to pick the leaders who will rule Iraq—as the British, after World War I, picked Faisal, after his expulsion by the French from Syria to rule in Iraq. It should mean letting Iraqi citizens have a chance to pick their leaders. No one should expect a Jeffersonian democracy to emerge full blown from the present chaos, like Aphrodite from the sea. But even a government selected by a random process would be better than Baath rule.

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Political elites in the West, especially those who opposed the U.N. coalition's use of force against Saddam, have talked much about the need for immediate elections in Kuwait. They seem more eager to intervene in the internal affairs of the least repressive country in the Gulf—the victim of a catastrophic invasion—than in Iraq, its perpetrator. It's more urgent to improve the political process in Iraq—to give Iraqi citizens access to information and some opportunity for making informed political choices. Is it likely that Arabs and Muslims, of all peoples in the world, are unable to judge their own self-interest and move toward self-rule? Turkey shows that, contrary to the received wisdom of many Western Arabists, Islam is not incompatible with democratic rule. The disaster visited on Iraqi subjects by the Baath dictatorship, and the avowal of democracy by the resistance groups, are the right occasion for testing the myth about the incapacity of "the Arab street" to make informed choices.

It was essential that the Desert Storm campaign have a clear-cut political and territorial objective that could be accomplished rapidly and decisively. Nonetheless, we have always had other goals, and if we are to bring about useful long-run change toward a moderately stable order in the Gulf and in the Near East, we have to be ready to use discriminate force, and to use some force now, in the service of other clear-cut limited aims. We can slow somewhat the pace with which we bring our airmen home without stopping it; or we could send in some replacements. In any case, no matter how fast our planned withdrawal, the onset of disease and famine produced by the devastation of Iraq's infrastructure and by the prolonged internal fighting is taking place before the eyes of our forces in the region. We and the coalition will still have a massive amount of force in the area, a selection of which can be used for clear, limited, ends that are political as well as humanitarian.

What the U.N. coalition needs most is a little clarity about its essential aims beyond U.N. 660's demand on Iraq to get out of Kuwait. Many are embodied in the dozen or so U.N. Security Council resolutions that directed the coalition and empowered it. They include holding the present Iraqi government to account for the enormous harm it has done to other nations. The public accounting of the harm done can be as important as the compensation. And the latest U.N. resolution, U.N. 688, calls for a detailed report to the Council of the harm done by the Iraqi government to its own people. Just airing the atrocities against innocents, whom the Baath government has used both as targets and shields for its military power, will be clarifying generally in the Middle East, where, for example, a member of the coalition, Syria, and all factions of the PLO have used innocents as both targets and shields. That has been a chronic, continuing source of regional instability. But holding the present Baath dictatorship to account for the harm it has done against innocents is incompatible with trying to preserve it or standing by while it suppresses all opposition.

Paramount among the conditions for getting Iraq to fulfill the demands made in these resolutions is ensuring that individuals in Iraq can freely communicate with each other and with the outside world. Such freedom of information is essential not only for Iraqis to choose leaders whose promises will be credible, but also for the viability of any arms agreements to control manufacturing activities that can quickly be converted to the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. It is an essential—and not yet adequately understood—prerequisite for the improved order the president seeks in the region.

If we are clear enough about our purposes, we can use military force discriminately in ways that will avoid both chaos and the restoration of Baath totalitarian control. The United States and other members of the U.N. coalition should announce their support for U.N.-supervised democratic elections in a unified Iraq after a period in which the U.N. member nations have made available to Iraqi citizens an accounting of the atrocities of the Baath regime. The allies should also clearly state that they oppose the Baath government's use of helicopter gunships, jet fighters, artillery, rockets, and tanks to suppress opposition, and regard the use of such force as a violation of the current truce; and that they will use air power selectively to compel the present government to live up to the conditions of the truce and to stop the slaughter of innocents.

Members of the coalition should use photo reconnaissance and surveillance by other sensors and other means to verify, document, and publicize any aspects of the war the Iraqi government is waging against its people, such as the reported use of chemicals. And the coalition should air-drop communications equipment to the Iraqi resistance to aid in this process and to help them coordinate their actions.

The allies should also consider inserting some special forces to aid in their use of air power by bringing equipment useful in identifying and locating Republican Guard units and their heavy equipment, and in calling in and directing any use by the coalition of precision weapons against such units, and to help organize and direct the resistance to the Baath government's reimposing its control. In any such use of special forces, Arab members of the coalition should play a most prominent role.

While the present battle goes on between the resistance forces and the Baath government, and as the United States brings soldiers home, the coalition should not hurry to withdraw all its forces from the substantial part of southern Iraq that it currently occupies, nor formally conclude the occupation. Air power based nearby and air patrols over Iraq—"Eyes in the Sky" and the air power to pursue infractions of U.N. demands selectively—are the last things we ought to take out.

It would be a terrible irony if our historic military success were to end in an equally historic political and human disaster. ●

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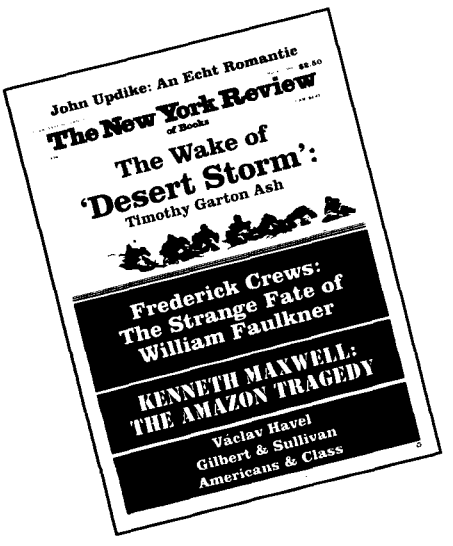
Oliver Sacks by David Levine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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Venice Observed

The nighttime walk through Venice by the two lovers in Visconti's *Senso* is one of the most haunting film sequences that I know. The nighttime walk through Venice by the two lovers in Paul Schrader's **The Comfort of Strangers** (Skouras) is not equivalent, but it's comparable. The new sequence, like the earlier one, mingles the beauty of the city with the sensuality of the pair and tinges the mixture with threat.

In this new film, two English lovers, Mary and Colin, have come to Venice on holiday. She is an actress, divorced, with children at home. He apparently does something in publishing. They have been lovers for some time and are not now especially passionate with each other. Walking about Venice, they are secretly followed by a stranger called (we learn) Robert, who is photographing them. One evening the lovers get lost in the twisted streets, and Robert, who is Venetian, maneuvers himself into an acquaintance with them, takes them to a bar—evidently a gay bar—and eventually to his very luxurious apartment, where they meet his wife, Caroline, a Canadian.

All this alerts us to strangeness, cordial though Robert and Caroline are; but it's all accepted by Mary and Colin, if somewhat guardedly. They even accept an invitation to stay and dine. But their visit to the apartment has a curious effect on them. Mary and Colin have been rather inactive sexually. After they part from Robert and Caroline, they go back to their hotel and hardly leave their room for several days because they are so busy making love.

They don't plan a return to Robert and Caroline, though they have been invited. Yet one day they find themselves in front of the other pair's house and are waved up by Caroline from the balcony. What happens then resolves the mystery of the photographing, deepens the sexuality, and ends in horror.

These qualities are what made Harold Pinter the ideal choice to adapt Ian McEwan's novel, of the same name, for the screen. McEwan writes in an almost uninflected style, precise and calm, leading the reader through increasingly bizarre circumstances without paying them much attention—which heightens their bizarreness. For the screen, Pinter has both more and less at his disposal. He has actors' presences, spoken words (an entirely different language from printed words), sounds and silence. But he loses McEwan's advantage of having us listen, figuratively, to one voice only and of making shocking events peripheral.

For instance, when Robert and Colin happen to be alone during the latter's first visit, Robert suddenly and without provocation punches him in the stomach. The dumbfounded Colin doubles up, gasps, and stares at him. Robert simply lights a cigarette and winks. And Colin does nothing about it. (By which near-collusion, Robert seems to stake a claim on him.) In the novel the punch is coolly described and seems almost like a page from a lab report. On the screen the punch is right *there*, so vivid that it nearly bursts the texture of the film. The peripheral quality is lost. But the film gains another way: the acquiescence of Colin is also right there, magnified.

Throughout, Pinter renders his best service to McEwan by transmuting McEwan into Pinter. One of the hallmarks of Pinter is his use of, let's call it, incantation—the repetition of phrases and sentences. Here he uses that device strikingly. As the film begins, as we see a woman moving through a gorgeous Venetian apartment, we hear a man's voice (Robert's, as we learn) telling of his childhood and his father and how, as he aged, the imperious father used to touch up his mustache with a woman's cosmetic, mascara. The relevance of that story—with its combination of male (mustache) and female (mascara)—is not yet known, but it is all handled so well that we are willing to be intrigued. This opening account of his father is twice repeated by Robert, first to Colin and Mary soon after he meets them, and again at the very end in quite different circumstances. The words themselves become relevant; their even stronger relevance to the film's ambience is the very fact that Robert repeats them.

The dialogue in McEwan's novel is spare because he wants his own voice to prevail. Pinter uses much of what McEwan dialogue there is, but he must supply a good deal of his own, and he does it with his unique paradoxical flavor, astringent yet rounded, comic yet tense. (A minor self-reference. In the novel Colin is, or has been, an actor. Pinter puts him in publishing, possibly as a nod to his play *Betrayal*, in which a publisher and his wife visit Venice.)

Pinter traces McEwan's themes through

FILMS WORTH SEEING

City Zero. *Some bitter comedy and some tingles in this Kafkaesque nightmare from the Soviet Union. A Moscow visitor to a small town slips further and further into a bureaucratic and social morass. (Reviewed 4/8/91)* **Class Action.** *A Hollywood entertainment that really entertains. The basic gimmick: a father and daughter are lawyers who face each other in a big case. The dialogue is crisp. Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio is fine. Gene Hackman is superb. (4/15/91)* **The Doors.** *Val Kilmer is scowlingly strong as Jim Morrison in Oliver Stone's overlong, overdone but pulsating saga of the 1960s rock group. (4/1/91)* **Paris Is Burning.** *Jennie Livingston's documentary about gay black fashion shows is always fascinating and eventually poignant. (4/22/91)* —**SK**

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the film almost with recognition. That sudden punch, for instance; there's a scary speech about a punch in *The Homecoming*. Also, there are Pinteresque outbursts of violent speech that signify not sudden heat, but long loathing. We get such outbursts from Robert, who despises the present, worships the past of his father's day, and aspires to the governance that his father had. He abominates feminism—Mary once belonged to a feminist theater—because he believes that the core of love, of sex, is male domination. Without burdening Pinter personally with these beliefs, it's possible to find antecedents for most of them in his plays.

But the film is finally weak where the novel is also weak. It doesn't convey trenchantly enough that Mary and Colin have caught a kind of sexual fever in their first visit to the luxe apartment, that their protracted steamy bout of lovemaking, during which they fantasize in lurid terms, is the result of that fever. Because the sense of infection isn't clear enough, the film leaves unfocused what I take to be an important underlying theme: that Colin and Mary have found in Robert and Caroline components of themselves that they didn't know they contained: dark, lurking powers. (Another Pinteresque theme.) This lapse diminishes the force of the drama's finish, in which Robert and Caroline achieve—through Colin and Mary—their ultimate desire, regardless of cost.

Yet the strangest thing about this strange film is that it isn't unsatisfying until it's over. Even then, *The Comfort of Strangers* is so seductively made and acted that we almost don't mind its shortcomings. (Almost.) Dante Spinotti, the cinematographer, makes Venice luscious, and he lights his interiors subtly. Angelo Badalamenti's score manages to suggest Italy, the Byzantine quality of Venice, and the specific moods of each scene. Paul Schrader, the American who directed, has tried stylization before, in *Mishima* and *Patty Hearst*, with sad results. Here he succeeds beautifully.

Motion is his style. With the opening shot—the camera moving under an immense and ornate ceiling, wandering on through the sumptuous apartment hung with paintings of nudes until it reaches a huge bed—Schrader involves place and atmosphere. Motion continues. Throughout the film, his camera seems to float around the characters, replicating the presence of Robert as voyeur, voyeur even of himself. It is directing of reticently fine design.

With his actors, too, Schrader has done excellently. Rupert Everett and Natasha Richardson, as Colin and Mary, acquire a glow as the story progresses. Richardson, her hair in long golden tresses, finds new sensual reaches in her voice. Everett catches perfectly the haughty, quasi-non-committal sexuality of the English. Caroline is played by the English actress Helen Mirren, with a trans-Atlantic accent. Experienced in this kind of role, she suggests sexual wildness under her afternoon-tea manner.

The key performance is by Christopher Walken as Robert (born Roberto). This is the best work of his that I've seen in years. His voice has never sounded more resourceful. (His Italianate accent is fair.) And, despite the weight he has put on, the part fits him immaculately. It calls for suavity, troubling charm, the sense of a scuttling mind beneath a smooth exterior, sexuality with a fierce coldness that makes it dangerous. Walken has them all. ●

The blues and the 1990s.

The Devil and Robert Johnson

BY RUSSELL BANKS

In the six months since its release, according to a recent article in *The New York Times*, the new *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings* (Columbia), a two-record collection of every known take made by the legendary blues singer, has "gone gold." It has sold more than 325,000 copies, is rising fast on *Billboard*'s chart, and even won a Grammy. This is startling. How is such popularity possible, during the ascendency of Vanilla Ice, for an obscure Mississippi Delta blues singer, a black itinerant barrelhouse musician who died in 1938 at the age of 27, "crawling on the floor and barking like a dog," killed by poisoned whiskey administered by a jealous husband? What on earth could his chilling songs and his diabolical voice be saying to so many American record-buyers in the 1990s?

Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings
(Columbia)

I don't know if it's still true of listeners today, but blues fans of my age like to tell about the first time they heard Robert Johnson. It resembles our compulsion to say where we were when Kennedy was killed and our lives were unexpectedly turned into vessels filled with American history (or so it seemed then), and we needed to say how it felt. When we first listened to Robert Johnson, it was the long sharp blade of American musical history that we felt pass through us, and it, too, scared us.

Listening to Johnson for the first time was not like discovering any other musician—not Dylan, not Elvis, not Aretha, not even Charlie Parker or Billie Holiday. The shocking, almost weird personalism of Johnson's voice, as it dipped into a bass growl, came back with a shout, and abruptly streaked off in falsetto cries, whoops, and nasal keenings; and the songs of sexual desire and impotence, infernal pacts and male braggadocio, unaccountable damnation and cruel sensuality, driven by a guitar that sounded like two or possibly three separate instruments at once, with bottleneck whine, boogie beat, and melodic strut shoving boneyard lyrics straight down a lonesome highway somewhere south and west of Memphis—the music blew by us like a hot wind. You weren't sure if you should cringe and hide or receive the blow and dissolve in tears.

In 1975, Greil Marcus wrote that:

> Johnson's vision was of a world without salvation, redemption, or rest. . . . Johnson's music is so strong that in certain moods it can make you feel that he is giving you more than you could have bargained for—that there is a place for you in these lines of his. . . . Johnson's music changed the way the world looked to me.

More likely, it changed the way we looked to ourselves. For most of us, as for Marcus, this would have been sometime after 1969, when *King of the Delta Blues Singers*, Columbia's first reissue of Johnson's music, appeared.

I don't think that my friends and I, bohemian college kids, '60s culture vultures, were musically naive. We'd listened to plenty of blues, Delta and Memphis and Texas style, electrified Chicago boogie and Library of Congress folk. We'd been to Newport in the early 1960s

RUSSELL BANKS is the author most recently of *Affliction* (HarperCollins) and the forthcoming novel *The Sweet Hereafter*.

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and heard it sung by elderly black men in overalls. And there were recordings of numerous musicians from the Delta who'd preceded Johnson or were his near-contemporaries, Charlie Patton, Skip James, Son House, Howlin' Wolf, Johnny Shines, and on and on, like medieval jongleurs or Provençal poets, an entire caste of remarkably gifted and disciplined people working in a vernacular art that had suddenly appeared in a specific region in a fully articulated and evolved form. Even so, no amount of blues we'd heard before had prepared us for Columbia's first reissue of those thirty-two amazing songs that Johnson recorded for Paramount's Vocalion label in makeshift studios in late 1936 and early 1937.

The originals were made in five legendary sessions in a hotel room in San Antonio and a warehouse in Dallas. They were released, of course, as 78 rpm singles, called "race records." Such recordings were aimed at a newly discovered group of musically discriminating consumers who were Southern, rural, and black. These people had grown up dancing and romancing to blues sung and played by experts and more than a few authentic geniuses in barrelhouses and juke joints all the way from Georgia to Texas, but especially where cotton was king, along both sides of the Mississippi Delta south of St. Louis and north of New Orleans. To have heard Johnson on those old records, only twelve of which were released during his lifetime, one would have been a member of the surprisingly large audience that Don Law, Paramount's peripatetic producer, had targeted so successfully in the late 1920s to mid-1930s, or one would have been a collector of old 78s, an archivist or musicologist, or a serious blues musician.

I was none of the above, so it wasn't until 1970 that I got to put that first album, and the second, *King of the Delta Blues Singers, Vol. II*, released shortly after, onto a turntable. I cranked up the volume, heard the first few bars of Johnson's high, hardened voice and his bullying bottleneck, caught the shudder and spooky cry of one song after another, and felt the top of my head lift off. The music and the man seemed one, in a terrifying way. And there were stories about the man that made a fellow nervous.

It surely seemed to Johnson, and to many of his contemporaries, that he had acquired his musicianship in a Faustian pact. For some, there was the possibility, even the likelihood, that Johnson had dealt personally with the devil in the context of Delta and New Orleans voodoo, or hoodoo, as it's often called to distinguish it from the more elaborately structured Haitian voudoun. It's through hoodoo, especially, that Johnson may have obtained ritualized access to an extension of his sense of self that enabled him to make his extraordinary jump from acolyte to wizard in a single year.

ROBERT JOHNSON BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

At the age of 19, Johnson disappeared from the Robinsonville, Mississippi, area, where he had been hanging around the slightly older bluesmen Son House and Willie Brown. When he came back to town a year later, according to House and Brown, he had undergone a transformation. The shy, awkward kid who was so-so on the harmonica and a clear amateur on the guitar had been changed into the kind of charismatic, virtuoso musician who steps forward and puts everyone else behind him. In his famous "Crossroad Blues," he seemed to sing of such a passage:

Yeeoo, standin' at the crossroad
tried to flag a ride
oooo ooee eeee
I tried to flag a ride
Didn't nobody seem to know me, babe
everybody pass me by
Standin' at the crossroad, baby
risin' sun goin' down
Standin' at the crossroad, baby
eee eee eee, risin' sun
goin' down.

"Risin' sun goin' down": this strange image of simultaneous ascent and descent, this almost mystical paradox, is Johnson's uncanny version of a required episode in the life, or the passion story, of the blues singer. Something *did* happen during those months whan Johnson was supposedly living with his family down in Hazelhurst, Mississippi. It's tempting, therefore, to take some of the lyrics of his songs literally, and many commentators have done just that. Surely Johnson sounds, well, dead-serious, in "Me and the Devil Blues," when he declares,

You may bury my body
down by the highway
side
So my old evil spirit
can catch a Greyhound
bus and ride.

It's an exotic reading and a popular one, but in many of Johnson's songs the figure of the devil takes on a more universal, and therefore more threatening, aspect than that of Papa Legba or even the dark, death-dealing Baron Samedi. In the context of hoodoo, voodoo, or voudoun, those powerful figures (and other ones, too) appear all over the Caribbean and southeastern United States late at night at a crossroads under a cottonwood tree, awaiting appropriate need and propitiation, empowering the disempowered and revitalizing in ancient African terms the cycles and mysteries of human life. For Johnson, however, the devil and other myths of damnation of-

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ten signify and dramatize the complex forms of social and sexual pathology, especially toward women, that lie just beneath the surface of our civilization. As in these lines from "Me and the Devil Blues":

> Me and the Devil
> was walkin' side by side
> Me and the Devil, ooh,
> was walkin' side by side
> And I'm goin' to beat my woman
> until I get satisfied.

Even without the anxious whine and the sexy falsetto of Johnson's voice, even without the heavy, violent whack of his guitar, the lyrics of the song emerge from, and unsparingly reveal, a psychological darkness and inner pain that one usually associates not with folk music or dance hall tunes, but with modern confessional poetry. This is the work of a disturbed male psyche telling its frightening and frightened secrets. No apology, no rationalization, no denial. Just the awful truth of the sick need to beat a woman.

By switching abruptly in a single verse from the flirtatious, slightly heretical image of a man striding side-by-side with the devil to the image of that same man making the terrifying promise that he will beat his woman until he gets his satisfaction, Johnson imbues the figure of Satan with radical sexual complexity and power, and gives to his raw little narrative a chilling believability that utterly transforms the romantic convention of the male figure in thrall to the devil. Compare Mick Jagger's alleged sympathy for the devil. No, when, in "Rambling On My Mind," Johnson howls, "I got mean things / I got mean things all on my mind," you believe him; it's not a swagger, it's the cry of a mangled heart.

Johnson's life was filled with mystery—illegitimate birth, strangely absent father, cruel stepfather, three or four name changes, married at 17 and a widower a year later, his child bride dead giving birth to his child, then simultaneous appearances in cities far from one another. Magical conversion from apprentice to master, years of solitary wandering, friendless, driven, obsessed, two famous recording sessions, and then the half-dozen stories of his death, all different, unresolved until only recently with the discovery of Johnson's death certificate by Gayle Dean Wardlow, establishing the date, August 16, 1938, and the place, Greenwood, Mississippi, of the death of one Robert Johnson, musician, age 27. The discovery in turn made it possible for the Houston-based blues historian Mack McCormick to find two surviving eyewitnesses to Johnson's murder, one in Indianapolis and the other in Flint, Michigan; he reported his findings to the sheriff of LeFlore County, Mississippi, who was "astonished at being handed a thirty-one-year-old murder" but declined the opportunity to pursue the "circumstances of the crime."

The crime was that of a husband poisoning a musician who'd seduced his wife. As McCormick says, "It had been a casual killing that no one took very seriously." In their eyes Robert Johnson was a visiting guitar player who got murdered. And even today, who can be sure of anything? Except the music, of course. And now we have all the music in a marvelously preserved form, every existing master and alternate take he ever made, thanks to Columbia and Lawrence Cohn, the producer of the entire "Roots 'n' Blues" series, who is surely sitting in a catbird seat, having finally overcome endless and perfectly rational objections to this reissue.

Like most blues, especially Mississippi Delta blues, Johnson's music came straight from the American killing ground of race and class. Still, his work cannot be reduced to an expression of harsh sociology. It was also the expression of a solitary man, celebrating and castigating his inescapably mortal body and mind. It was the music of a people,

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of African-American people, a folk music expertly played and sung; but it was also the private, intimate song of a single human being, a lyric poetry made and performed with genius.

I'd heard one and the other before, the blues of the collective and the blues of the individual, but until Johnson I'd never heard both at once, and the tension between the two (for they did, as they must, slash and stab at each other) was thrilling and fearful. The man was dangerous, to himself and to anyone willing to listen. For all the elegant beauty of his music, he sounded always ready to explode with feeling, some of it religious, much of it erotic, all of it dark, angry, vengeful. He sounded cursed, doomed.

Doom was something we could understand, or so we thought, in the difficult, struggling '60s. In those years we were ready for Johnson; thirty years late, maybe, but ready. Blues was music that made sense aesthetically and morally: it was normal (it came out of our childhood and adolescence, we could dance to it) and it was right (about race, class, sex, and death). Although I hadn't known then that such a necessary thing existed, we were listening to the basic American song-cycle, to *our* Lieder. Sometimes you don't realize you've been hungry until you're fed. By the time I'd heard "Crossroads Blues," "Terraplane Blues," "Come On in My Kitchen," and "Last Fair Deal Gone Down," I understood that without this music, we Americans, all of us, are not complete. With it, however, I could view us as potentially tragic, probably damned, and, because of what the blues obliges us to face, possibly heroic:

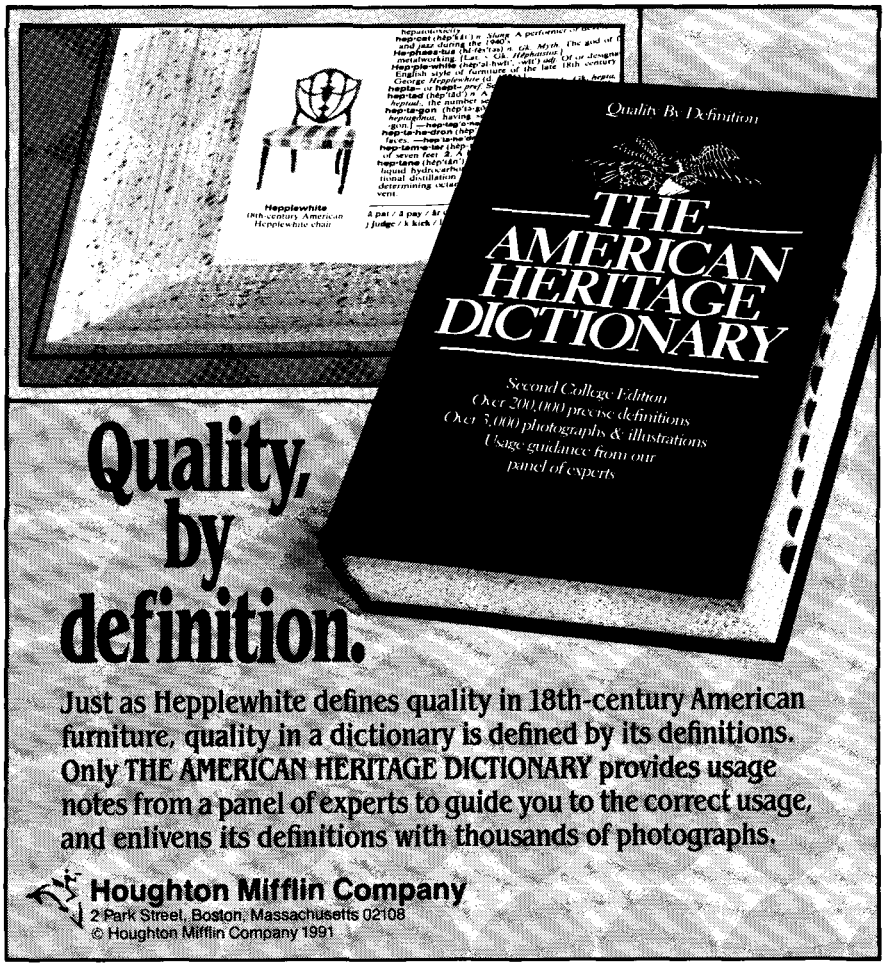
> Well, the blues
> is a low-down achin' heart disease
> Like consumption
> killin' me by degrees
> I can study rain
> *oh, oh, drive, oh, oh, drive my blues*
> I been studyin' the rain and
> I'm gon' drive my blues away. . . .

Whether you are white or black, middle class or working class, rural or urban, Northern or Southern, the blues in general, and the blues of Robert Johnson in particular, define and dramatize in song the central American experience. It's our only history without lies. (Try saying that about any other American music.) It cannot be simple music, then. And it isn't. When we listen to the blues, we respond elaborately to the melody and rhythm, to the lyrics, and to the performer's way of expressing his or her physical and psychological self. At each moment of its performance, there are at least three crucial, highly articulated modes of expression streaming at us, filling us as if our body and mind were a single thing. There is the music, purely and simply, which is to say, how the song exists in time, pitch, and timbre; and there is the song in language, the very words; and there is the body of the singer, the bending, croaking, shrieking voice that is nothing less than the entire body of a human being that imposes itself on us, forcing us to accommodate ourselves to its presence, its pain, its pleasure.

As just about everyone knows, the melodies and the rhythms of blues were generated primarily by West African modes of music. Polyrhythmic, pitched in what's sometimes called the microtonic scale, with flatted thirds and sevenths and sometimes fifths, the blues can sound to the uninitiated, as Hayden Carruth has noted, like Chinese opera. The poetics of the blues, moreover, is that of oral poetry, utilizing fairly rigid patterns and combinations of words, rhyme, imagery, and line that are passed from one musician to another: "floating lyrics," they're called. The patterns are simple and repetitive, so that they can be remembered quickly, and then modified with ease to suit local conditions and particular circumstances, as well as the eccentricities and the limitations of the performer.

Naturally, when we describe these more or less formal aspects of Johnson's (or anyone's) blues, we're viewing it as an African-American folk music, saying what it has in common with the music of Charlie Patton, Son House, and Skip James, with their hundreds of songs from the 1920s and the decade before. Those were tunes and rhythms that Johnson carpentered together and played as his own, which in turn were taken apart and put back together again by Robert Lockwood Jr., Muddy Waters, B. B. King, and others, and then still later (with steadily diminishing impact, as the music gets distanced from its American sources) by Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones, the Band, and so on.

Still, Johnson was also an innovator. In speaking of his achievement in a musicological manner, in studying it as folk music, we're not accounting for the fact that Johnson's music was something strikingly new in the world. As his protégé, Johnny Shines, says, "Robert came along with the walking bass, the boogie bass, and using diminished chords that were not built in one form. He'd do rundowns and turnbacks, going down to the sixth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and seventh. He'd do repeats. None of this was being done. . . . I guess the guitar players before Robert come along just picked up what their daddies had done." And Johnson ran the same inventive changes on the lyrics as he worked on the strictly melodic and rhythmic aspects of his inheritance. He knew people were listening, and so, more than any other blues singer before or since, he gave them something to think about. According to Shines, the audiences "had reason to listen to the words, they was *living* the words." Johnson was living the words, too.

In the company of the devil or alone, Johnson stood, then, at a crossroads: between the oral tradition and that of the phonograph record, between the folk tradition and that of the individual artist, between African Americans' nineteenth-century antebellum and postbellum experience in the rural South and their twentieth-century urban diaspora to Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles. He was perfectly situated to make himself into the means by which the forms and techniques of a highly sophisticated folk art could be transformed. He was the figure in his art who took the crucial step away from the impersonality and the anonymity of inherited forms and traditions and, without violating those forms and traditions, personalized them, employing them self-consciously to affirm his difference from the rest; and for that moment his listener, too, can stand at the crossroads, at the point where the distinction between the personal and the historical is erased.

It's a flashpoint, though, and it's easy to get burned there. Johnson was virtually immolated by the occasion. He was unable, like Son House, or Charlie Patton, to hide his peculiarity, his pathology, behind the sweet acoustic anonymity of the folk, where what you heard was what there was. And he was equally unable to turn a show business trick like Howlin' Wolf, B. B. King, or Muddy Waters and disguise his inwardness with an electrified persona. It's hard to imagine him growing old and wise like Johnny Shines, who, born only a few years after Johnson, is still playing in juke joints in and around Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Shines's wife accompanies him when he plays, and fends off the fans and interviewers and counts his whiskies. But Robert Johnson died half a century ago and is already ensconced permanently in the pantheon of legendary artist-heroes, the figures with turbulent lives and mysterious deaths.

He was, in his way, the Rimbaud of America. Perhaps a part of his legacy is the countermyth that he provides, the corrective for this time, which feels like no period so much as the 1950s, obsessed with control, order, discipline, an era that associates the erotic with death and lives in terror of the irrational. In such a time we could do a whole lot worse, for an Antichrist, than the fiendish and exemplary Johnson. "I mean, if a person lives in an exploratory world, then this is the best thing that ever happened to him." (Johnny Shines again.) ●

The Ends of Empathy

By Michael Ignatieff

The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas by Isaiah Berlin edited by Henry Hardy

(Knopf, 277 pp., $22)

A few years ago Isaiah Berlin remarked that his reputation was based on a systematic overestimation of his abilities. (Long may this continue, he added merrily.) Self-deprecation is an essential element of Berlin's public style, and it is not feigned. Where in his work, he asks, where amid the essays on liberal philosophy and the studies of the Russian intelligentsia, is the unanswerable masterpiece, the paving-stone-sized chunk of learning before which everyone will bend the knee? Where is the book about Romanticism that was to be quarried from the lectures given twenty-five years ago at the National Gallery in Washington? Inside a temperament loved for its balance, its wisdom, and its humor, there is a shadow, a doubt that he has measured up to his own and to others' expectations. Berlin himself worries that he has lacked the systematic application to leave behind a great philosophical treatise, just as he has lacked the gradgrind virtues to leave behind a vast standard work of historical scholarship. These doubts are certainly not tormenting, but they are real.

How would Berlin categorize himself, one wonders, if he were to use the distinction made famous in his essay on Tolstoy between the foxes, who know many things, and the hedgehogs, who know one big thing? Berlin appears to be a fox who wishes he were a hedgehog. But the matter is more complicated. Besides a sneaking admiration for the hedgehog, there is a measure of fear, too. Indeed, Berlin might be seen as the fox who has spent his life warning the rest of us animals about the hidden teeth and unexpected claws of the apparently innocuous hedgehog. It is a leitmotiv of Berlin's work, running through his political theory and through his historical essays, that the human desire for certainty, for system, for unshakable belief is noble, incorrigible, and highly dangerous.

This, of course, is a familiar theme in the anti-totalitarian liberalism of postwar Europe, and it can be found in Milosz, Canetti, Popper, and Hayek. They are some of the last authentic voices of the decencies of the old pre-1914 empires reflecting on the nationalist and totalitarian barbarism that followed. Berlin belongs among these figures, in moral stature, in intellectual range, in depth of achievement. But while he shares their denunciation of the totalitarian temptation, he has been singular in stressing just how plausible that temptation can be. He is a devoted liberal who nonetheless understands the recurrent human longing for a political system that would promise escape from the dreary eternity of liberal compromise.

As a fox who works best in the aphoristic compression of the essay form, he has had to endure a certain nagging from the hedgehogs, from those who believe that he is a belletrist, a litterateur, not quite serious enough. Yet the solidity of his reputation is surely a sign that lightly worn learning often lasts longer than monumental erudition. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, a new collection of essays in the history of ideas written over thirty years, and now brought together by Berlin's indefatigable and impeccable editor Henry Hardy, shows how much his reputation as a philosopher of liberty and as a historian of the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia depends on his literary gifts. There are precious few masters of the great nineteenth-century historical

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prose style still living, and Berlin is one of them.

It is not entirely clear how he learned to write and speak as he does. He did have to learn it: he was born in Riga in 1909. Like Conrad, like Nabokov, he is one of the masters of English prose for whom English is a second language. His oldest friends recall him, even as an undergraduate, already speaking and writing in the same deep and drolly formal, intricate, and breathless manner. Macaulay seems to have been one of the models; Berlin was reading him as a young Russian expatriate at Saint Paul's School in the early 1920s.

Berlin writes exactly as he speaks, in a rush of clauses and propositions that wends its way from thought to thought, occasionally defying the listener or reader to follow, yet managing to combine formal precision with a joyful exuberance and pleasure at the sonorities and the depth of language itself. The prose is old-fashioned, but not pompous; rhetorical, but not soft; complicated, but not precious. And there are a few moments when it achieves a tone of noble and desolate beauty, as in the peroration that closes the essay on Tolstoy:

> At once insanely proud and filled with self-hatred, omniscient and doubting everything, cold and violently passionate, contemptuous and self-abasing, tormented and detached, surrounded by an adoring family, by devoted followers, by the admiration of the entire civilized world and yet almost wholly isolated, he is the most tragic of the great writers, a desperate old man, beyond human aid, wandering self-blinded at Colonus.

What is on display here is something more than fine writing. It is a deep intuition for human dividedness and inner conflict. As Aileen Kelly has put it, all of Berlin's work insists that human dogmatism is the result, as in Tolstoy's case, of a longing for some certainty that allows us to overcome our inner divisions. The equipoise of Berlin's public temperament is one of his greatest creations; in company, he is wise without seeming pompous, witty without seeming trivial, affectionate without seeming sentimental, calm without being cold, and shrewd without being cynical. And this only makes his sensitivity as a writer to the anguish of others a more interesting artistic achievement. While he writes with great feeling of figures like Turgenev and Herzen, whose liberal temperaments seem akin to his own, his best work is about temperaments and minds radically opposite. He is attracted to seers and visionaries—to Akhmatova and Pasternak, for example—precisely because he knows he is not one himself.

He is unusual among great talkers for being a good listener. As his memoiristic writings show, he is someone to whom important confessions are often made. This gift for listening is on fullest display in the essay in *Personal Impression*, in which he describes his meetings with Russian writers and artists during his service with the British Embassy in Moscow in the autumn of 1945. All the honorable Russians whom Berlin met were like "victims of a shipwreck on a desert island, cut off for decades from civilization." Were Wells, Sinclair Lewis, Bunin, Khodasevitch still alive, one writer asked him? And on Berlin's side, a parallel ignorance: when he arrived in Petersburg and learned that the poet Anna Akhmatova was still alive and could be visited, he could hardly speak: "It was as if I had suddenly been invited to meet Miss Christina Rossetti."

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SIR ISAIAH BERLIN BY DAVID HOCKNEY
INK ON PAPER, 1980

Akhmatova regarded Berlin as "the guest from the future," as a figure providentially sent from the West to bear witness to the heroic survival of the voices of the vanished Silver Age. She can be forgiven for this rather grandiose conceit: Berlin was her first visitor from the West since the First War. As someone who, like Pushkin, had always insisted that Russian culture belonged fully to the West, it must have been deeply affecting for her to renew that dialogue for the first time after the Siberian silence of the Stalin years.

For Berlin, that visit in 1945 to Russia and its shipwrecked survivors was a personal watershed. Before it, he had been an important figure in the circle of Oxford analytical philosophers around J. L. Austin, a bright spark in the anti-appeasement circles of All Soul's, and the author of an important study of Marx. But in all this the Russian side of him had been silent. After the visit to Petersburg, after rediscovering "the streets, the houses, the statues, the embankments, the marketplaces, the suddenly familiar broken railings of a little shop in which samovars were mended below the house in which [his family] had lived . . . ," the Russian side came to the fore. From 1947 on, he began writing the essays on Tolstoy, Belinsky, Turgenev, and Herzen that were collected in *Russian Thinkers*, published in 1977.

One of his purposes was to rescue such figures, especially Herzen, from canonization by a Soviet state that came to bury the Russian freedom their writing so obviously longed for. In many ways, indeed, Berlin can be seen as the greatest living figure of the Russian intellectual tradition he has done so much to save from the condescension of Stalinist posterity. This tradition remains the source of some of his deepest attachments. Russian culture never separated the political, the aesthetic, and the metaphysical, never distinguished the historical and the philosophical, but sought to combine all of these in one surge of

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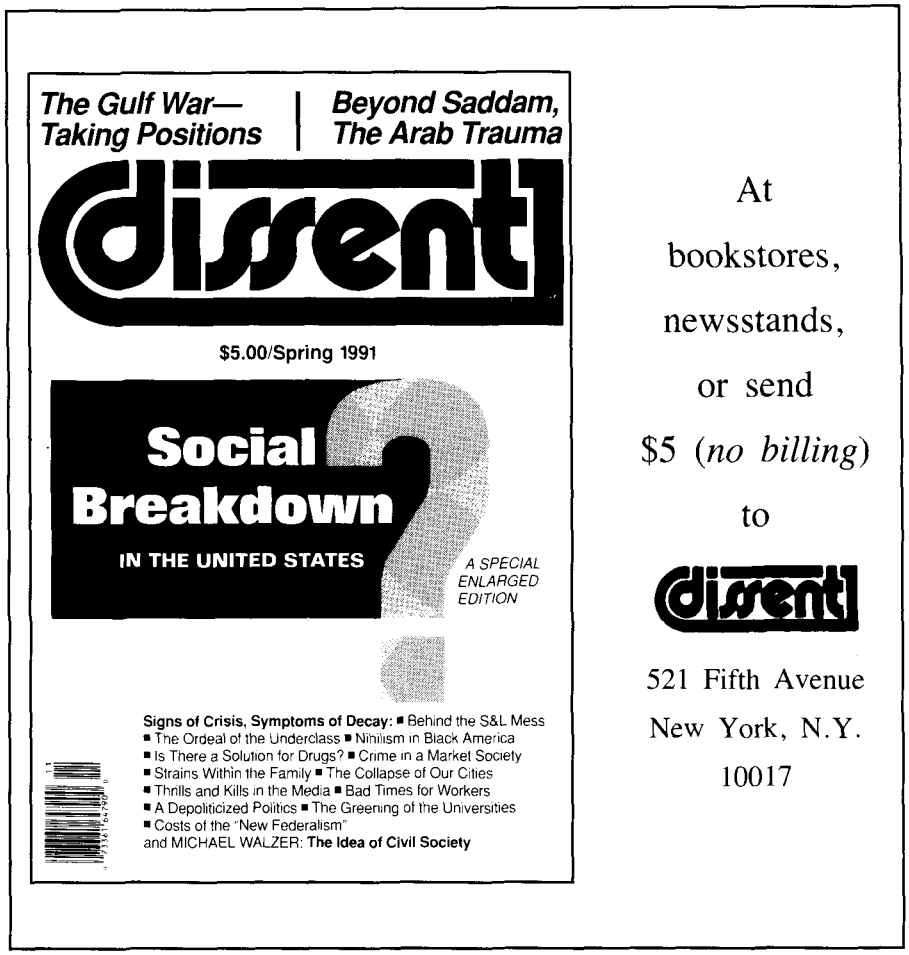
creative thought encompassing all domains. The apparently foxlike dispersal of Berlin's intellectual interests—his fascination with music, his omnivorous political, moral, and historical investigations—represents his own continuity with this Russian intellectual style at its finest.

The 1950s were the most intellectually creative period of Berlin's life. (It does not seem an accident that this creativity coincided with the period of emotional happiness inaugurated by his marriage.) In those years Berlin's historical studies of Russian thinkers converged with larger investigations into the political and social philosophy of the Enlightenment, and both historical strands flowed into the political philosophy of liberalism that was best elaborated by "Two Concepts of Liberty," Berlin's inaugural lecture as Oxford's Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory in 1958.

The strands that connect Berlin the intellectual historian and Berlin the philosopher of liberty are so various that I will mention only one that has been ignored. It is empathy, and its central role in Berlin's temperament, in his historical writing, and in his account of the psychology of a liberal society. It is possible that Berlin's Jewishness, and the sense of marginality that goes with it, helps to explain his uncommon gift for empathy. Minorities and expatriates have to be good at such subliminal readings; their moral radar must be able to pick up the subtle and not so subtle cues of like and dislike that emanate from the majority community.

In short, they have to know their enemy's minds. Berlin himself is troubled by his own abilities in this regard, because with empathy often goes a certain willingness to be agreeable. A fatal desire to please is the vice that he most taxes himself with, and this he has been known to attribute to being a Jewish (and also Russian) expatriate in an Anglo-Saxon culture. He reproaches himself for understanding other people so well that he adapts himself too much to what they desire of him. But on this score he taxes himself too much. His entire work can be understood as a vindication of empathy, as an attempt to reconcile firm, nonrelativist moral principles with a historian's understanding of the plausibility of alternative views of the world.

As the essays in his new book make clear, what is required, for the higher empathy, is something more than the comprehension of an alien argument. It means the intuitive grasp of "the particular vision of the universe which lies at the heart of [a thinker's] thought." The history of ideas can only come alive, Berlin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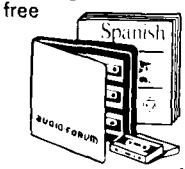

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writes, to those who can "to some degree re-enact within themselves the states of mind of men tormented by questions to which [their] theories claim to be solutions."

Such an empathetic understanding of opposites plays a central role in his political theory. Compromises and trade-offs between competing values would be difficult if individuals were unable to enter into the views of those with whom they are in disagreement. Were empathetic understanding of alternative moral viewpoints impossible, political argument would have little point, attempts at persuasion would be in vain, and the arbitration of force or majority rule or both would be required on all occasions to ensure political decision. In practice, liberal societies cohere because of agreement, because individuals are capable of seeing the world as others might see it, of removing their own ideological and moral blinkers and imagining how their own position must appear when viewed from the outside. Empathy—and self-detachment, its twin—is what makes liberal compromise possible.

Some of Berlin's most interesting political writing deals with the problems that arise around the empathetic understanding of difference. How does a person make sense of views radically different from his own? Supposing such understanding is possible, what right does he have to judge other views in terms of his own values? The two questions, though distinct, have the same answer for Berlin. Human beings are capable of understanding each other because, despite all our differences, we share limited but common passions, interests, and needs, in the light of which we can manage to see ourselves as others see us, and also to judge, both others and ourselves, according to the criteria of shared moral sentiments.

Much of Berlin's political theory has been written to rebut the conservative charge that liberals do not believe in the existence of shared moral sentiments. On this caricatured view, liberalism is the politics of moral relativism. Liberals put liberty first, not because they believe in its intrinsic or ultimate moral priority, but simply because no other prudential political arrangement can hope to contain or order human debate about ultimate ends. The debate about fundamentals is between incommensurables. In the absence of any possible shared moral universe, liberals favor liberal political arrangements simply because they enable everyone to pursue incommensurable ends subject only to the legal framework required for the adjudication of conflict. And to the degree that liberalism encourages or requires mutual understanding, conservatives frequently charge, it is of a relativist kind. *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*: for a liberal, to understand is to forgive, and to explain is to explain away. Liberal "understanding," on a conservative account, is a kind of social emollient, at best smoothing the edges off conflicts, at worst tolerating the intolerable.

Berlin's liberal doctrine insists, however, that we can understand antithetical points of view because we share some ultimate and common understandings of what human beings are. Dialogue does not serve merely to confirm each relative viewpoint in the rightness of its views. Because we do share certain universal attachments, we can call each other or ourselves to account when our conduct or our opinions fail to accord with these understandings. "We must not," he writes, "dramatize the incompatibility of values—there is a great deal of broad agreement among people in different societies over long stretches of time about what is right and wrong, good and evil."

When Berlin speaks of universal values, he means European ones, and when he speaks of the rules of our conduct, he means "the habits and outlook of the Western world . . . the common notions of good and evil, which reunite us to our Greek and Hebrew and Christian and humanist past." In specifying that these are the values that distinguish the civilized from the barbarian, he makes it clear that he is not referring to a universality tested against ethnographic evidence from non-Western societies. Indeed, the question of whether Westerners have the right to judge and condemn the practices of other civilizations is not central to Berlin. All of his thinking has been within and about the traditions of the West. His concern with relativism is not anthropological. It is with the question of whether, despite transformations within Western thought, there remain sufficiently long-term continuities of moral outlook that we can still understand the worldview of past societies.

Berlin believes, like Vico, that the answer is yes. These continuities order moral behavior, not simply because they are traditional but because they continue to convince: they are the thought experiments that we all conduct to answer the question of what forms of behavior we must have for this to be a decent, minimally humane world. Because the answers given to this question display a long-run continuity in human experience, and because ordinary men and women continue to feel persuaded by these continuities, moral conflict in Western society tends to occur on common, rather than on incommensurable, ground. Men disagree in society, Berlin argues, not because each is enclosed in a subjective web of relativist conviction impervious to argument, but because the goods that men contend about—equality versus liberty, justice versus order—are themselves difficult to reconcile in political practice. Berlin's liberalism stresses that human disagreement is not due primarily to a failure of understanding; it arises because we seek goals that are in contradiction.

As Bernard Williams has pointed out, loss is central in Berlin's liberalism. Tragic choice—achieving one good, sacrificing another—is inescapable in political life. Still, in the face of concrete problems, political agents are capable of squaring incompatible values through trade-offs. "The concrete situation is almost everything. There is no escape. We must decide as we decide; moral risk cannot, at times, be avoided." Values that appear incompatible in theory may remain so; but in practice a clear understanding of the practical constraints will make decision and choice possible. "Crucial to this process of understanding is the human capacity for empathy."

There may be occasions, however, when actors understand each other perfectly well, fully enter into each other's states of mind, and yet continue to feel that their values are not merely incompatible but incommensurable. Here we come to a moment when empathy is clearly insufficient, by itself, to overcome political disagreement. The claims of the spiritual versus the material life, for example, cannot be squared by trade-offs, and cannot be meaningfully compared on, say, a utilitarian scale. In cases of such incommensurability, a liberal society encourages the more or less polite or more or less incomprehending stand-off of mutual tolerance.

Because values can be incompatible and on certain occasions incommensurable, it follows for Berlin that political society ought to value liberty above all else. The implication is that liberal society is the one best suited to the reality of human nature; best suited to the fact that human beings disagree about ends, and about the means to secure these ends; best suited to the fact that there are many plausible good lives that individuals can choose to live. And a crucial additional fact about human beings is that they know this to be so. They can enter into the universe of moral premises that they do not happen to share and can understand, again in Bernard Williams's words, "that these different values do each have a real and intelligible human significance, and are not just errors, misdirections, or poor expressions

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of human nature."

In Berlin's thought, moral conflict in the political sphere appears to concentrate mostly on conflicts between positive human goods—liberty versus equality, justice versus efficiency. If this is so, the implicit substratum of common moral agreement for Berlin seems to consist chiefly of definitions of bad human conduct. In the end there do remain, according to Berlin, a small number of acts that all sane individuals can agree are inhuman, indecent, beyond the pale. Thus any society, liberal or otherwise, can generate sufficient agreement about what is human in order to frame laws. A liberal society is distinctive, however, in believing that it cannot specify shared moral ground much further than at its periphery, at the circle that defines what is beyond the pale. Within that circle, there are so many competing human goods individuals can legitimately follow that a society has no warrant for intensive regulation of private conduct. The facts of human nature permit sufficient agreement, therefore, to guarantee the conditions of negative liberty ("freedom from") but not sufficient agreement to justify collective pursuit of some ideal ("freedom for").

In *The Crooked Timber*, Berlin makes it clear how much this account of liberalism owes to his historical studies. As he explains in a somewhat autobiographical essay titled "The Pursuit of an Ideal," he learned from Machiavelli's account of the radical antithesis between Christian and princely values that humans can hold radically opposed views about the proper ends of human life, while from Herder he took the idea that the culture of each historical epoch has its own "center of gravity," its own set of values, intrinsic to itself. But it was from Vico that Berlin grasped the significance of the idea of understanding, of imaginative insight into otherness, which Vico calls *entrare*. To the relativist doctrine that each epoch's center of gravity is so different that succeeding generations cannot hope to understand it, Vico famously replied in *The New Science* that what has been made or thought by human beings can be understood by them. It was Vico who pointed Berlin's way to a reconciliation between the Enlightenment's faith in the universality of human nature and Romanticism's insistence on the historicity of human culture.

As these essays show, Berlin's political liberalism has charted a middle course between Romantic and Enlightenment poles. On the one hand, he has pointed out the dangers that flowed from the Enlightenment's overconfidence in rationalism in politics, and the accompanying conviction that there must be one single political solution to human ills. On the other, he has sought to salvage the Enlightenment's faith in a politics and morality based on an anthropology of human nature from the Romantic movement's veneration of the national, the particular, and the personal. Berlin has wanted to learn from the Romantic emphasis on the plurality of human goods that men can plausibly serve and embrace; and yet he has warned us that the Romantic insistence on utter devotion to personal ideals was translated into a doctrine of radical will that led to the politics of fascism.

Berlin's account of fascism, however, raises two difficulties. First, a fascist or protofascist ideology explicitly questions the status of those human values that liberalism takes as universal. On what grounds, therefore, does Berlin believe it possible to salvage his commitment to the universal from the fascist criticism? Second, fascist behavior tests to the limit Berlin's belief that it is possible to enter into and understand worldviews repugnant to one's own.

The premise of Berlin's theory of understanding is that we can understand what we abhor because we share the same humanity. There is no ultimate conflict between understanding and judging—in the case of fascism, between comprehending and condemning. Indeed, Berlin maintains that one can only judge what one has fully understood, and that far from being true, the phrase *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner* reverses the actual psychological relations between understanding and judging. The more we understand, he would say, the easier it is to judge, and the more incumbent on us it is to do so. From the conclusion of "Historical Inevitability," his famous essay of the 1950s, it can be inferred that Berlin has little patience with the claim that the more one understands the historical, social, or psychological conditions of an odious action, the less odious it can be made to seem.

But the relation between understanding and judging should also be investigated from the other direction. It is obvious that there are cases in which judging impedes understanding, in which strong moral repulsions make one reluctant to undertake that voyage of empathy that Berlin regards as a prelude to comprehension. Fascist behavior might be an example of something so inhuman that while, or perhaps because, we have no trouble abhorring it, we have considerable difficulty understanding it.

Berlin's most sustained attempt to think about fascism occurs, in a mediated and indirect form, in his essay on Joseph de Maistre, the Sardinian diplomat and ultraconservative essayist of the European counterrevolution in the early nineteenth century. In Berlin's analysis, de Maistre deserves to be called a fascist precursor, not because twentieth-century fascists claimed him as such, but because his thought prefigures fascist belief: its distrust of human reason and its celebration of violence; its insistence on social subordination; its apotheosis of leadership and radical will in politics; its impatience with human rights, constitutional impediments, or countervailing institutions to the exercise of power.

De Maistre moved the conservative counterrevolution against the French Enlightenment well beyond the Burkean defense of tradition and history, all the way into the terrain of authoritarianism. De Maistre set out to demolish the core of liberal politics: the idea of transhistorical human rights derived from an anthropology of human characteristics. De Maistre insisted that there was no such thing as Man, there were only men, only Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, in all their self-referential particularity.

Berlin shows that de Maistre argued in contradictory ways: first he denied the very possibility of a universalist definition of man on Enlightenment lines, and then he went on to argue for a dark definition of human nature every bit as universalist as the one he was criticizing. De Maistre maintained that, to the degree that crosscultural and transhistorical generalizations about human conduct are possible at all, they go to show that aggression and the love of violence are as much facts of human nature as sociability and cooperation. In Berlin's paraphrase of de Maistre's essential premise, "Men's desire to immolate themselves is as fundamental as their desire for self-preservation or happiness." War is the eternal law of humankind. The violence that is natural to the human species is in turn part of the essential violence of the natural world. Death is intrinsic to life, and men seek death just as much as they seek to preserve life:

> The whole earth, perpetually steeped in blood, is nothing but a vast altar upon which all that is living must be sacrificed without end, without measure, without pause, until the consummation of things, until evil is extinct, until the death of death.

From this dark vision of animal life and human psychology, an authoritarian political order is easily derived, of a conservative or a fascist kind. A conservative kind would seek to use political authority to repress or suppress the natural violence and aggression of its subjects; a fascist form of authority would seek to channel such aggression along a path of violent conquest and warfare.

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Berlin criticizes de Maistre's vision of human nature for its selective emphasis on human malignity, yet if de Maistre exaggerates human malignity, could it not be said that Berlin exaggerates commonality of moral outlook and cooperation? Berlin does not deal with such a challenge directly. Yet there is one essay in the new book, "European Unity and its Vicissitudes," that can be read as an indirect response to de Maistre's assault on liberal tenets. This essay reveals just how much Berlin's liberalism was written for a world recovering from the shock of Auschwitz, for a world unable or unwilling to believe the lessons in human nature revealed behind the barbed wire. If Berlin's liberalism is dark, skeptical, disabused, and cautious, if it is entirely divorced from the sunny progressivism of the nineteenth century or from the shallow hedonism of utilitarianism, the reason surely must be that he was a Jew forced to meditate on the destruction of his people, a philosopher required to confront history as nightmare.

In this essay, he begins his treatment of the fascist experience by emphasizing once again that fascism was an extreme form of Romantic nationalism. It denied the very idea of a common human nature and insisted that human kind was divided, by the facts of race and nationhood, into human and subhuman types. Fascism, therefore, carried the doctrine of moral relativism to its ultimate extreme. And when this nationalist relativism was married to the Romantic ideal of sincerity, of absolute devotion to one's own ideal, however conceived, the roots of fascist politics were laid.

One important implication of this analysis is that it seeks to recover fascism as an authentic product of some of the most noble European traditions. Fascism was not the eruption of primordial or instinctual evil, but the perverse elaboration of specific doctrines of sincerity, integrity, and national pride that, in other minds, could have noble consequences. In this manner, Berlin would insist that fascism is a historical, rather than a demonological, or a purely psychological, phenomenon. Such an interpretation provides the basis for his argument that fascism is humanly comprehensible, that we can understand what we abhor, because in this case, the ideology is human—all too human.

Accordingly, Berlin argues, we should think of fascism as a faithful working out in politics of some of our most cherished European values: the reverence for individual will, human creativity, and personal sincerity:

> The moving figure of Beethoven in his garret creating immortal works in poverty and suffering duly yields to that of Napoleon, whose art is the making of states and peoples. If self-realization is aimed at as the ultimate goal, then might it not be that the transformation of the world by violence and skill is itself a kind of sublime aesthetic act?

From this vision of politics as the aesthetic manipulation of men and societies it is, Berlin writes, "but a short step" to "extreme nationalism and fascism."

Berlin is not the first to suggest that fascism aestheticized politics, or to link its politics of the twentieth century to art of the nineteenth century, but on this point his account may be open to criticism. Surely the step from the Romantic theories of art to the real historical practices of the SS is anything but small. The chain of causation linking Romantic theory to fascist practice remains to be specified. It is one thing to demonstrate the specifically anti-human content of fascist romanticism, and quite another to explain how people could have believed it to be true, for example, that Jews did not belong to the human family. What is missing in Berlin's account of fascism is why such anti-humanist belief remained impervious to the facts, and why this error seemed so plausible that individuals could murder in its name.

The absence of this piece of the argument is important, because it is precisely the burden of Berlin's liberalism that most people *do* perceive the common humanity of other human beings. How, then, does Berlin sustain his own belief in the idea of common humanity, given that millions of fascists so evidently did not? One of the clichés of the postwar awakening to the facts of the Holocaust was to believe that it destroyed people's faith in the common goodness of human nature. Berlin's own reaction makes it clear that he will not be party to this form of despair. By "trampling on certain values," Berlin argues, fascism has paradoxically demonstrated their importance as the starting point for any politics of decency. There has been in Europe, he writes, a "kind of return to the ancient notion of natural law" in our discovery that "no court, no authority . . . could . . . allow men to bear false witness, or torture freely or slaughter fellow men for pleasure."

This is the somber core of Berlin's liberalism: no longer the bright Enlightenment view that men share the same interest in liberty and the exercise of reason. In liberalism after Auschwitz (and after the Gulag, about which Berlin was exquisitely sensitive before many other Western intellectuals), all that we have in common is our capacity to suffer, and unlike other animals, our consciousness of the suffering of others.

Such a definition of common human interests appears to set the limits of liberal tolerance for Berlin. "If," he writes,

> we meet someone who cannot see why . . . he should not destroy the world in order to relieve a pain in his little finger, or someone who genuinely sees no harm in condemning innocent men, or betraying friends, or torturing children, then we find that we cannot argue with such people, not so much because we are horrified as because we think them in some way inhuman—we call them moral idiots.

The important phrase "moral idiots" clearly implies an agent who, while ostensibly rational in instrumental ways, does not appear either to understand or to attach any significance to Berlin's idea of a common humanity. Such a description applies perfectly to the fascist, or more accurately, to the type of fascist that Berlin particularly wishes to understand, not the brute who acts under the compulsion of orders or his own sadistic instincts, but the individual like Albert Speer whose "high degree of scientific knowledge and skill, and indeed of general culture" did not prevent him from committing or abetting moral abomination.

The problem with the phrase "moral idiot," when it is applied to such people, is that it appears to accept that their moral choices are beyond the possibility of genuine understanding. The idea of moral idiocy appears to take back what the earlier historical analysis of fascist ideology seemed to grant: that these people were acting on a perverted yet understandable interpretation of post-Romantic European values. A moral idiot, by contrast, cannot be held to act on any consistently understandable premises whatsoever. He can only be resisted, or locked up.

On this reading, therefore, Berlin can give us plausible grounds, as a liberal, for judging, condemning, even locking up fascists. Fascism offered historical proof of the abject human consequences of a politics that denies the existence of transhistorical, transcultural, transnational human interests. Berlin's liberalism here reveals how far indeed it is from an all-forgiving relativism. The real problem is that the practice of empathy, the understanding of the other from within, that is central to liberal politics breaks down in the case of fascists. Or at least a wide gap remains between understanding the broad intellectual factors influencing fas-

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cist belief and understanding the particular fascist practice of murder and extermination.

Thus Berlin's liberalism faces a dilemma. Either he maintains that fascists are human, and therefore absorbs into his account of human nature some measure of the de Maistrian vision of human beings as innately and naturally violent; or he maintains that all human beings know what inhumanity consists in, in which case fascists cease to qualify as normal human beings. Berlin wants to maintain both that all human beings know what it is to be human and that fascists were human, all too human. If this dilemma is left unresolved in his account, though, it is left unresolved in most other accounts as well. Yet surely any liberalism must be haunted by the thought that it cannot fully understand what it has such good reason to despise. For what cannot be fully understood cannot be fully overcome. Here the liberalism of empathy reaches its limits, encounters the forces of darkness that it cannot comprehend or answer. Here liberalism encounters what it can only fight.

MICHAEL IGNATIEFF's novel *Asya* will be published by Knopf in October. He is writing a biography of Isaiah Berlin.

Hueffer and Puffer

BY RICHARD JENKYNS

Ford Madox Ford by Alan Judd

(Harvard University Press, 476 pp., $27.50)

The physical presence remains immensely vivid. He was large, round, pink, and slow, with canary-colored hair, bad teeth, a big nose, and a receding chin. There was a droop to his eyebrows, eyes, and mouth, the last partly concealed by a walrus mustache that added to the impression of kindly weariness. As he grew older, he became fat and wheezy; gazing through his pale blue eyes, his mouth habitually hanging open, he would gape and gasp like a landed trout. Indeed, people compared him to half the bestiary. He was "a behemoth in gray tweeds," according to one journalist. He had "dove's eyes," D. H. Lawrence said; "fish-blue eyes," said Mary Borden, "—kind, wise, but bored"; "watery-wise old-elephant eyes," according to Wyndham Lewis.

Alan Judd himself likens him to a big, solemn spaniel. In photographs he looks almost comically like a certain kind of Englishman—more particularly like a certain kind of Englishman abroad (snapped with Ezra Pound on the Riviera, for example, in white shirt and trousers, tummy straining against the buttons, belt threatening to come undone). What would one take him for? Country solicitor perhaps? Teacher at a minor boarding school? Like so much about him, this impression was misleading. Ford Madox Ford was half German (he changed his name from Hueffer in his late 40s) and by no means conventional. Judd puts it well, describing his years in Paris: "At nearly 50, he actually lived the bohemian life that others wrote about or, with the security of money behind them, played at."

To the surprise and the vexation of some of his younger acquaintances—Hemingway, for example, who was crudely jealous of him—he was highly attractive to women. He had four wives (so Judd calls them, reasonably enough, though strictly he was married only once, since his wife refused him a divorce), and there were other liaisons as well. His last wife reckoned, tolerantly and maybe even with pride, that there had been eighteen women in his life. Still, he was not a philanderer, says Judd, whose defense of his hero sometimes verges on the quixotic—this defense based on the paradoxical ground that he liked women. Perhaps his appeal to the opposite sex is not so surprising after all. As his third wife, Stella Bowen, explained, "The stiff, rather alarming exterior and the conventional, omniscient manner concealed a highly complicated emotional machinery. It produced an effect of tragic vulnerability. . . . A walking temptation to any woman, had I but known it." The same qualities make him an attractive subject for a biography. He was kindly, casual, indulgent to himself and to others, and Judd has written a kindly, casual, indulgent, and slightly self-indulgent life.

Ford has an odd place in English let-

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ters of the twentieth century. He has never been very widely read, nor has he ever fallen into total neglect, like such once popular contemporaries as A. C. Benson, say, or Maurice Hewlett. There is always about to be a surge in his fame, but somehow, like the White Queen's jam, it never quite seems to arrive. He is said, by Judd among others, to have written the best novel in English to come out of the First World War, which sounds like high praise until you try to think of the second best. He has found admirers especially among other writers—a jury we are bound to treat with respect. Allen Tate called *The Good Soldier* this century's masterpiece of British fiction. Graham Greene was a stalwart enthusiast; he often reread *The Good Soldier,* and for him too it was one of the best novels written in English during this century. So, too, Gore Vidal, who "would place Ford among this century's half-dozen or so major novelists in English." And Judd himself is a novelist of repute.

These are formidable testimonies, one might think. Can we agree with them? Everyone allows that Ford wrote too much: some eighty books in all. One of the many surprises of this seemingly muddly man (Pound remarked that if he were placed naked in a room without furniture, he would be able to create total confusion within the hour) is that he was a hard and disciplined worker. Judd prints extracts from his minor works, especially his poetry—an admirable practice in the biography of a neglected author. But they will not enhance his reputation. The poetry is slack and discursive. In damaging contrast Judd also includes a poem by William Carlos Williams on "Ford Madox Ford in Heaven," written shortly after his death; crackling with life and sparkle, it makes "fat assed Ford" (Williams's own phrase) seem flabby in comparison.

Judd also gives us some pages from *The Soul of London,* an early work of nonfiction about a poor but bravely resilient Cockney wife—arty, sentimental, and rather conventional—and extracts from a late book on *The English Novel.* Here some of the judgments are erratic, on occasion even preposterous: Fielding cannot construct a plot, Trollope is the equal of Jane Austen, the greatest of English novelists is (no, you won't guess) Frederick Marryat, and nothing in *War and Peace* is as valuable as one of Ford's scenes. There is everything to be said for pricking the complacencies of received opinion, but a perky perversity is not to be taken for genuinely fresh judgment.

It looks as though Ford will still have to stand or fall by his novels. For some admirers, his masterpiece is the sequence of four novels called *Parade's End,* which traces the career of an English gentleman, Christopher Tietjens, from the end of the Edwardian age through the First World War and out the other side. I cannot see much in them myself, except that the second and third books give a vivid picture of the muddle, boredom, and fear of warfare. The narrative is clumsy, the characters either unrealized or caricatured, the dialogue unnatural. And in all those hundreds of pages so little happens; that might be said of Proust too, I suppose, but Ford has not a fraction of Proust's revelatory power. Most readers, I suspect, find it heavy going.

That could not be said of *The Good Soldier,* by far his best-known work. This is a short novel—it has more the character of a novella—about a complex dance of passion and adultery among a small group of people, told in deceptively casual style by a narrator who proves to be more deeply entangled in the story than we are at first allowed to know. The hero is Edward Ashburnham, a country gentleman, immensely honorable, yet with a weakness when it comes to women, who becomes ensnared in miseries that end with his suicide. The book has been compared to Henry James (whom Ford had known as a young man when he was living on Romney Marsh, a few miles from Rye, where the Master resided in the Georgian splendor of Lamb House), and it has indeed a Jamesian atmosphere of spoiled, stifled claustrophobia, as well as a chilling geometry of passion that one might liken to the symmetrical adulteries of *What Maisie Knew.* The narrator, even, is another of those rich, emotionally smothered Americans-in-Europe. Where it departs entirely from James is in its loose, apparently confidential style. For instance: "He thought she only pretended to hate him in order to save her face. . . . I don't know. I leave it to you." And again, at the end of the next paragraph, "I can't make out which of them was right. I leave it to you."

Some readers are fascinated by the endless perspective of ambiguities that such sentences seem to open up, like a set of mirrors reflecting one another to infinity. But doubts creep in. Take this, for example: "So, perhaps, it was with Edward Ashburnham. Or, perhaps, it wasn't. No, I rather think it wasn't. It is difficult to figure out." After a while, this sort of thing starts to look less like a sophisticated openness, more like a failure of stylistic command. *The Good Soldier* is plotted and told with elegance; it is a pleasure to read, but in the end I doubt whether it amounts to very much. If it is a

Beneath Searchlights

Shop windows glow like fish tanks. Even in town
the sky's so full of stars I can imagine
sun beyond sun until there seems no darkness
in the dark—a trick mind plays against midnight.
But just a trick. It doesn't change the darkness:
cats yowl, my dog's hair bristles in response.
He's snuffling at a bush when suddenly
harsh light explodes around me. And then I hear
the *whup, whup, whup* of helicopter blades
above and slightly to the left—the spot,
though higher, where I imagine my soul drifts
and watches me. The searchlight lingers.
The taut leash makes my hand point toward the dog.
Come here, I hiss. He's busy. I haul him, choking,
into the light. Now that my alibi
stands growling at my side, I dance a jig,
then bow—but upward, blindly. As if applauding
the spotlight dips once, veers off, scraping hard
light over houses, trees. The choked dog whimpers.
He jerks, I pull, and we comprise one linked
uneasy beast that see-saws through dark streets,
this way and that, toward home, sleep, food, and work—
repeat, repeat, repeat until we die.
But that's untrue. Too stark. Sometimes—tonight!—
I satisfy the light that questions me.

Andrew Hudgins

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classic, it is a minor classic at best. It is in the paradoxical position of being both overrated and too little known.

There is in its conception a conflict between artifice and naturalism that is never quite resolved. Part of the problem, perhaps, is that Ford instructs the reader to have certain emotional responses rather than making him have them. It is not enough—indeed, it is an artistic mistake—to be constantly told by the narrator that Ashburnham's story is a tragedy. Ford had wanted to call the book *The Saddest Story*, but the publisher objected, reckoning that this title would not sell. *The Good Soldier* was the publisher's own choice of title, and it is a good title in itself, though Ford hated it on the reasonable grounds that it has nothing to do with the book. More surprising is that he thought his original idea for the title particularly inspired. It is not for an author to tell us that his book is vastly sad; we shall make up our own minds about that.

Both Tietjens and Ashburnham are supposed to be tremendously honorable, but they seem to treat their women pretty badly. Perhaps this tells us something about Ford's own life. Tietjens, in particular, seems to have elements of wish-fulfillment in him; when we meet him, his words and actions appear complacent and ill-tempered much of the time, yet we are to believe that he is a brilliant mathematician, a superb connoisseur, a devoted officer to his men, a martyr to high principles, and so on. The plot requires his wife to persecute him with motiveless malignity, but we are assured that she is passionately in love with him deep down.

Judd takes a forgiving view of Ford's own private life; others have viewed it more harshly. I will not pretend that I can judge the matter. Judd is indeed generous to his subject—maybe a little too pleased at his generosity. Everyone agrees that Ford was an outrageous liar. He claimed that he had been to school at Eton. He multiplied his sales figures by ten. When he received an honorary degree from Olivet College, Michigan, he composed the speech for the College Orator to deliver, in which he awarded himself a doctorate in agriculture from the Sorbonne, promoted himself to colonel in charge of two regiments in action, and proclaimed himself the first person in England to have praised Joyce and Gertrude Stein. Even here Judd attempts some sort of defense: Ford knew he would not be believed; or he merely wanted to entertain people; or he was trying to construct the ideal world that ought to have existed. This is hardly convincing, and perhaps it is a pity in any case to suck the roguishness out of Ford's personality. There is not much point in a Baron Münchhausen who is guilty merely of a little exaggeration.

There is a further problem in that Judd makes a point of refusing to cite any sources. Does it matter? Most references in biographies are to letters, which none of us is going to chase up, or to private communications, which cannot be checked. But I think it does matter, partly because of Ford's unreliability, partly because of a certain imperiousness in Judd's literary makeup. He begins the entire book with an anecdote designed to set the tone by illustrating Ford's huge generosity: in the 1930s he gave half of all his money to a Georgian prince whom he had never met before and who then insulted him, outraged by the smallness of the sum. But what is the source of this impressive story? It can hardly be the Georgian prince. Was it Ford himself? I think we should be told.

The problem is compounded because Judd suffers a little—to be fair, only a little—from Ackroyd's Syndrome: "I'm an important novelist and my intuitive powers will take me to truths denied to lesser mortals." The first two chapters tell us what to think of Ford before we have properly met him—a tactical mistake. The third begins, "He was born, then, on 17th December 1873 at Number 5, Fair Lawn Villas, Merton, Surrey." That "then" is condescending: the reader is not conciliated by being told, in effect, "These dull facts are a concession to plodders like you."

But the book recovers from its misguided start. Judd does write very well, and the book is also enlivened by many good aperçus about life and literature—the novelist's touch. Yet for all Judd's intelligence and perceptiveness, there is something missing. He tells us that he is aware of the limits of biography: "the heart of another is a dark forest," and the biographer is like a blind man feeling with his stick, conscious at the end of his journey not of how much is known but of how little. That is admirable, and Judd is indeed restrained and sensitive in speculation. Yet his account of Ford is oddly muffled in unnecessary ways. Important things—a heart attack, a nervous breakdown, his religious attitudes—pass by in barely a sentence.

Perhaps Judd is too much the artist to make the ideal biographer. His strong and attractive personality flavors his pages. That is a mixed blessing: Ford was a big man, but at times one feels that Judd's large presence is blocking our view of him. Despite these criticisms, it

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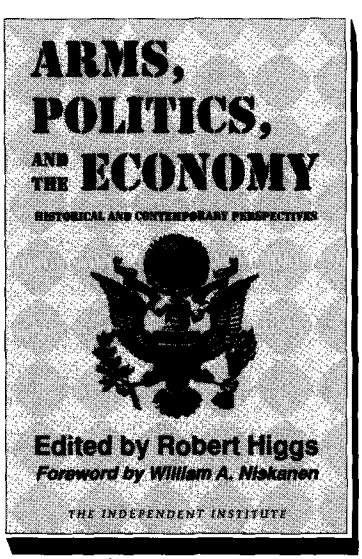

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should be said that the book is thoroughly enjoyable to read and paints a lively portrait of the outward character of Ford and those closest to him (he is less good on the larger milieu). But is it a true portrait? And how important is Ford as a writer, after all? I don't know. I leave it to you.

RICHARD JENKYNS is the author of *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Harvard University Press).

Contested Terrain

BY IRVING HOWE

The Smile of the Lamb by David Grossman translated by Betsy Rosenberg

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 325 pp., $19.95)

The young Israeli writer David Grossman has published two novels—*The Smile of the Lamb* (1983) and *See Under: Love* (1986), both of which have been well received in his country. When the second of these books came out in English translation in 1989, it was greeted with lavish praise in the United States; Hillel Halkin declared it, in THE NEW REPUBLIC, a "truly extraordinary work of fiction." Now Grossman's earlier novel has been issued in translation, and I have the unhappy task of filing a minority report about this talented writer.

Just how talented Grossman is we can see in the opening segment of *See Under: Love*, which depicts the childhood fantasies and traumas of a nine-year-old boy in Israel. Momik is a child of Holocaust survivors who have tried to shield him from their own memories, and as a result he envisions the "Nazi beast" as a vague, hovering creature, a threat always present but never quite located. The writing is fierce and taut, but after a powerful start *See Under: Love* rambles off into a group of phantasmagorical episodes that I found pretentious, willed, and tiresome. Bruno Schulz, a writer somewhat mishandled in recent fiction, suddenly appears as a figure in the imaginings of Momik, now a grown-up and troubled novelist. Schulz does not die, as in fact he did, at the hands of a Nazi thug, but escapes to Danzig, plunges into the ocean to join a school of fish, and turns into a salmon. This curious transformation tempts literary critics into ingenious symbolic readings, but I found it all too literary (flounder to salmon), a disastrous exercise in up-to-date technique—so much so that its possible interpretation comes to seem inconsequential. Reviewers have applied the handy term "imaginative" to the Schulz episode, but I suspect that the term serves as a consoling surrogate for "confusing."

The Smile of the Lamb is, by contrast, relatively modest in conception, but it is also, I fear, an unsatisfying piece of writing. Grossman set his first novel in the West Bank, and he deserves credit for scouting a terrain that most Israeli writers find difficult. He has written, he says, "the story of the Jewish people in Israel, champions of humanistic morality and justice turned subjugators of another people, causing the erosion of their own values." This statement of intention seems to me admirable; but the book itself is something else again.

As a convenience let me separate two elements of the novel: its situation and its story. The situation turns on the twisted relationships among three Israelis, Uri, Shosh, and Katzman. Uri is a young soldier stationed in the West Bank, one of Israel's "gentle folk," soft and idealistic, and marked, as his wife, Shosh, puts it, by "the smile of the lamb." Shosh herself is an equally familiar type, ravenously neurotic, a virtuoso of *kvetching*. If "the smile of the lamb" strikes her as acceptable in a husband, she prefers as her lover someone more wolfish, the cynical and battered Katzman, Uri's friend and superior officer.

This triangle, if not exactly brimming with freshness, is probably no worse than many others in modern fiction: all depends on what the writer can make of it. It is a situation that cries out for narrative development, but mostly Grossman vibrates emotionally with his characters, so that again and again we share the self-lacerations of his trio—perhaps true to life, but like many things that are true to life, soon wearisome in a novel.

It may be argued in Grossman's defense that the entanglements of these characters should be seen as a neurotic refraction of the circumstances in which they find themselves, that is, the struggle in the West Bank. That may indeed have been Grossman's intention. Still, the troubles of his trio seem so uncontrolled and ingrown, so much a consequence of their own character disorders, that the neurotic aura too often gets in the way of the depicted circumstances.

The story, by contrast, is absorbing, especially if one trips past the allegorical suggestions. Uri has become the friend of Khilmi, a wise old Arab who serves a little as the Karataev to his Pierre Bezhukhov. When Khilmi's son is killed in a clash with Israeli troops, Uri has to break the news to the old man; and then, overcome not just by his own pain but by a sense of how insufferable life has become in the West Bank, Khilmi issues an "ultimatum": either the Israeli occupiers get out immediately or he will kill his beloved friend Uri, whom he has managed to entrap. The tense denouement comes when Katzman leads a squad to rescue Uri and the novel reaches a violent, necessarily ambiguous conclusion.

Even with its stereotyped characters (idealistic young Israeli, mythmaking old Arab), *The Smile of the Lamb* might have been a tolerable novel if Grossman had not been so intent on loading his pages with verbal and symbolic weight. Perhaps sensing that his matter is fairly thin, he compensates through a nervous strategy of verbal intensification, somewhat like a musician in a fever of vibrato. The result is wanton.

When old Khilmi screams in despair over the death of his son, Uri "groans. Ripping me right down the middle. No. that's not a groan, that's a blind drill press." Exactly what a *blind* drill press might be, Grossman does not tell us. He ought to have been content with the introductory groan. At another point, Uri examines a picture of the dead Arab boy and sees in him

> the infinite loneliness of one who has been bereft of life, whose body is but an empty hull stuffed full of cotton-wooly words by strangers, and just then he resembled one of the animal trophies hanging by the tail in the tent of Sha'-aban Ibn Sha'-aban, the mirthless hunter.

The first of these clauses would have sufficed, but a mania for accumulation drives Grossman to the bad prose of the second clause and the opaque comparison with "the mirthless hunter." And here, trapped in a metaphor, is Shosh:

> No one will ever try to coerce you, because you have willed yourself off on a sidetrack of time, a track no longer in use, where you can move forward or backward, and have fun in the station house where clock time has no set value like high-quality Opus magnet tape, . . .

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Grossman's overreaching can lead to embarrassment, as in Shosh's reflection that she "had known what she was getting into by allowing [Katzman] to resonate inside her." Some of this may be the fault of the translator—I am not equipped to check the original Hebrew—but I doubt it, since Betsy Rosenberg is quite capable of writing disciplined prose when Grossman's text asks her to.

Now, what seems interesting here is not the rightness or wrongness of my judgment, but the problem of how to reconcile it with the high praise accorded Grossman by the critics, say, by Halkin in these pages. Let's assume that neither Halkin nor I is so incompetent that both or either of our judgments should be dismissed. We might then suppose that our readings reflect sharply divergent critical outlooks, that while Halkin is inclined to admire a novel because it is experimental, I am inclined to be skeptical for the same reason. If either of these suppositions is true, then there is no cause for worry, since the problem has been shifted from the text to the critics.

But let's assume that neither Halkin nor I is excessively rigid in our literary tastes, and that we are both open to different kinds of fiction. There follows the possibility that one or both of us have neglected, or overvalued, important elements in the novel. Halkin might be charged with failing to recognize how pretentious Grossman's writing often is, while I might be charged with making too much of some isolated bad passages. How can this difference be resolved? Only through a tedious sequence of textual citation such as neither the editors nor the readers of this magazine would tolerate.

But suppose, again, that Halkin and I did cite many passages to support our judgments, and we still disagreed. What I take to be wanton he might feel to be evocative. And he might then go on the attack by saying, "You could also find plenty of bad passages in the novels of the Faulkner you admire so much." Would I be in difficulty? Perhaps; but I'd reply that the occasionally frantic rhetoric in Faulkner sustains both great narrative power and a profound moral vision, while Grossman's rhetoric, imbedded in what Shosh calls "the fermenting matter of my psyche," lacks such attributes. Still, Halkin would not be without resources for rebuttal.

But let us stop here. After every effort to test the ways in which two honest critics could reach such widely divergent judgments, the problem, not at all unusual in literary life, might still remain. Would we then be back where we started, mired in subjectivity? I think not. For the act of providing examples and arguments in order to discover the grounds for our different judgments should yield some illumination. It might also support the claim for criticism as a reasoned discourse by trained readers.

Where does this leave David Grossman? By now he must be thoroughly sick of critics, especially this one, who nevertheless wishes to repeat that in the marred pages of his two novels there lurks a large talent waiting to emerge.

IRVING HOWE's most recent book is *Selected Writings: 1950-1990* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich).

TRB *continued from page 4*

ber 1989, at a speech in California, "Mostly the audience stared at Reagan, whose gray hair was the main subject of conversation."

But soon Reagan's hair was once again just beginning to turn gray. A *Washington Post* review of his televised testimony in the John Poindexter trial: "His still wavy hair has swirls of gray." The *Post*, February 1991: "Except for the streaks of gray in his black hair, Reagan seems to have aged little since he left the White House."

Maybe he doesn't dye his hair. A decade of repeated shock discoveries that his hair is at last starting to turn gray suggests a scarier possibility than this rather mundane lie: his hair's been gray all along! But Ronald Reagan's had us so hypnotized that we can't even see it. How did Kitty Kelley miss this one?

MICHAEL KINSLEY

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

acceptance of the new AMA and ADA policies. Considering that AIDS is still ultimately fatal in 100 percent of those who contract it, Mr. Cohen's casual attitude toward the "minimal risk" of contracting it through medical care is morally reprehensible.

JASON RHODES
New Haven, Connecticut

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Peace Begins In Infancy

Kibbutz Hanaton Day Care Center, Western Galilee: GABRIEL SHPIEGEL (L) plays with ALLAH MUKARI (R) who lives with his parents, Interns ABED and SOUSAN MUKARI—on Hanaton.

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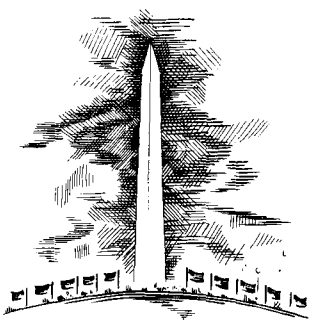
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Gorbo in, Gorbo out

THREE MONTHS AGO IN THIS SPACE I argued that Mikhail Gorbachev deserved to be viewed as a great liberator. My timing left something to be desired. The very eve of Gorbachev's attempted crackdown in the Baltics, his reconversion of Soviet TV into a transmission belt for Communist propaganda, and his tendentious "union" referendum was not, *perhaps*, the ideal moment to go around comparing him to Lincoln. Still, the basic point holds: the 80 million people of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and eastern Germany, who five years ago lived under dictatorships, now have democratic governments and full civil liberties. They are not rich and they are not particularly happy, but they are free; and the single most important reason they are free is that Gorbachev forswore the threat of armed force against them. Since that threat was all that held the Soviet Union's Eastern European empire together, the empire soon ceased to exist.

WITHIN THE UNION ITSELF, OF course, Gorbachev's record is far more mixed (though still, on balance, overwhelmingly positive). He ran out of fresh ideas two years ago; more important, by declining to run in a popular election, he forfeited the legitimacy he would need to carry out any such ideas even if one were to occur to him. Now it's too late—for him, anyhow. But thanks to what he did before he delivered himself over to the apparatchiks who now compose his only constituency (and who don't much trust him either), it may not be too late for somebody else.

THE CHANGES GORBACHEV wrought were different in kind from those of his reforming predecessors, the Lenin of the New Economic Policy and the Khrushchev of the 1950s thaw. Intentionally or not, Gorbachev's changes permitted the emergence of a whole range of independent power centers, from trade unions to the Orthodox Church to the rambunctious republican governments. As a result, the Soviet Union now has more than the beginnings of a civil society. (Over there, the term "anti-Communist" used to be the signal that someone was about to be exiled, hospitalized, or shot. Now it simply describes the country's most popular political position.) Gorbachev's remaining usefulness to his fellow citizens is now the same as it was to the Eastern Europeans: his reluctance to use massive force. (When the guns have in fact been used with his apparent acquiescence, as in the Baltics, the massacres have been more on the scale of Kent State than of Sharpeville.) Gorbachev called the army to Moscow to scare away the big pro-democracy demonstration planned for March 28; when the peaceful crowd bravely defied him, he did nothing. The sequel was another series of stunning political victories for Boris Yeltsin. Last week Gorbachev demanded one of those augmentations of his nominal authority that seem always to precede another dizzying drop in his ability to actually boss anybody around. A couple of days later, right on schedule, Georgia declared itself a separate country. At this rate, by the time Gorbachev has gotten the Supreme Soviet to invest him with the power to issue decrees repealing the law of gravity, Russia, along with its by then placidly independent sister republics, will be as democratic as Denmark.



SPEAKING OF COMPARING GORBAchev to American presidents, it cannot be comforting to Gorbachev to contemplate the fervor with which a recent visitor, Richard Nixon, identifies with him. You don't need to be a psychoanalyst to notice that the approving terms Nixon used to describe Gorbachev—"a brilliant politician," "a fighter," "a competitor," one of those larger-than-life statesmen who are either "great actors or great liars"—are precisely the phrases with which the sage of Saddle River presumably consoles himself. Like Gorbachev, Nixon was a bold maneuverer on the world stage, a smasher of his mossbacked party's foreign policy shibboleths, a compulsive traveler who found solace in the adoration of foreign crowds long after his fellow countrymen had grown disgusted with him. Like Gorbachev, Nixon climbed to power via decades of loyal party work. And like Gorbachev (lately, at least), Nixon was a dodger and weaver of the center, using and placating his right wing without ever quite sharing its simple certainties. Gorbachev has surely reflected that Nixon was forced to resign his presidency on account of offenses against democratic propriety, including the use of secret police methods against his political opponents. It is far from unlikely that a similar fate awaits the Soviet leader. If so, he can comfort himself with the thought that twenty years hence, perhaps, he can look forward to being respectfully received by an American president (Caroline Kennedy? Susan Molinari?), after which he will return home to report to his distant successor (Sergei Stankevich? Boris Gromov?) on the tribulations of the former superpower.

IF PAST EXPERIENCE IS ANY GUIDE, I can expect to receive at least one letter from a conservative reader objecting to my use, above, of the term "right wing" to denote the Communist diehards of the Soviet Union. Communists, my correspondent will complain, are now, always were, and ever will be the ultimate lefties. What Xan Smiley, in the current *New York Review of Books*, calls "the strange convention whereby the anti-democratic centralizers are referred to as right-wing and free market democrats left-wing" is routinely accepted in most of the Western press (and in most of the Russian press, too). Those of us who still regard ourselves as liberals, it must be admitted, use this terminology with a certain sadistic glee, since it allows us to insinuate that the Republican National Committee is somehow akin to the Politburo. This is unfair, of course. The truth is that a whole new political lexicon is needed. Maybe William Safire and Irving Howe should be named to co-chair a presidential commission to devise one. In the interim, though, aren't we liberals, having had to put up with so many years of right-wing innuendo that we are nothing but watered-down Leninoids, entitled to a little revenge?

BORIS YELTSIN MAY REGARD HIMself as a man of the Left, but in this matter of political semantics American conservatives have at least one powerful ally in Moscow: Mikhail Gorbachev himself. Addressing a meeting of scientists in Minsk a month or so ago, Gorbachev pouted that Russia's democratic radicals have "declared themselves to be left-wing." This is a travesty of "generally recognized terminology," he added crossly, because left-wingers are supposed to be "adherents of socialism and commu nism," whereas the democrats "are in favor of making society capitalist." Swinging into his peroration, the general secretary thundered, "Is it not clear that what we are dealing with here is a typical opposition of a right-wing kind? We should call a spade a spade." Gee. Maybe the Heritage Foundation and the Kremlin have something in common after all.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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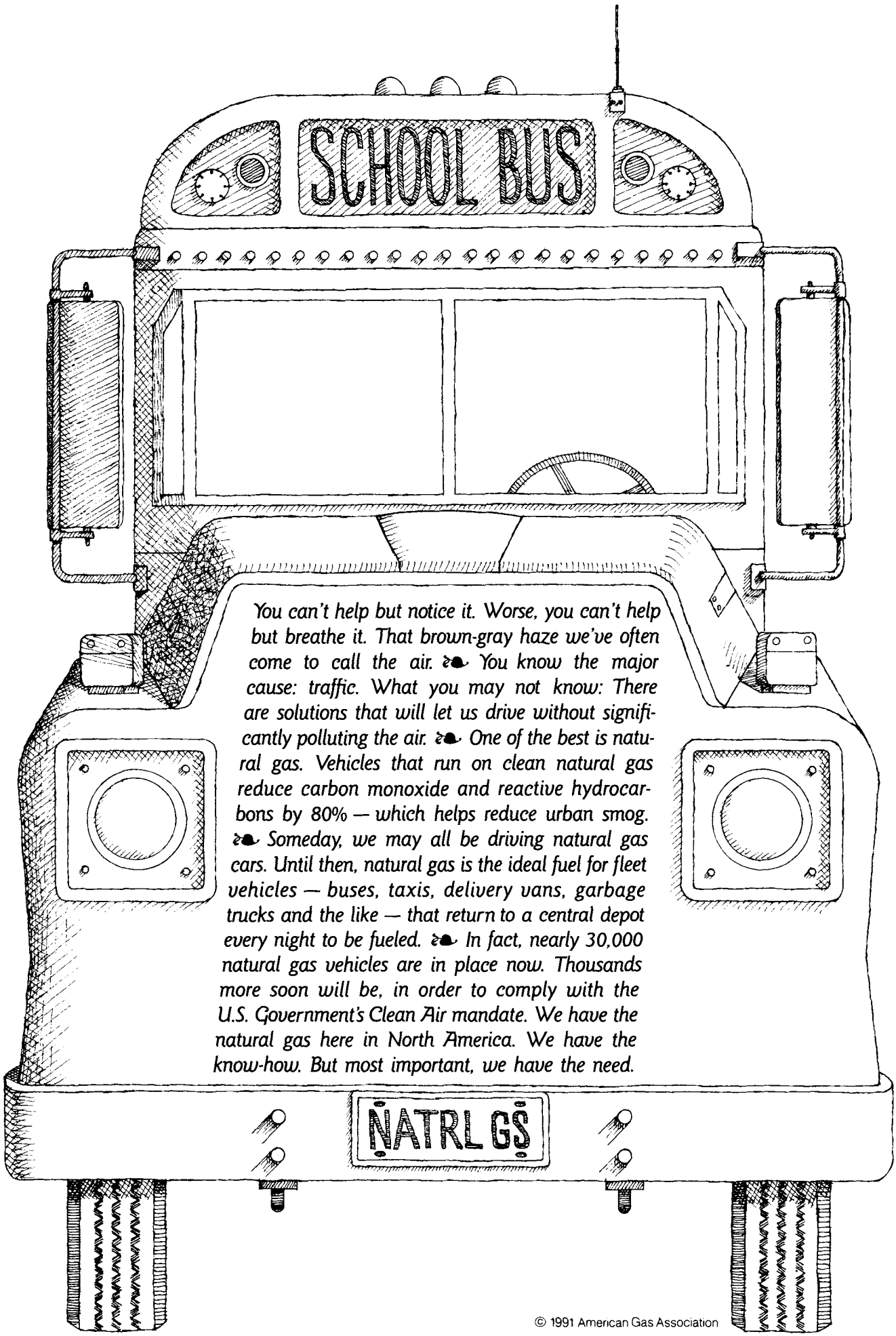

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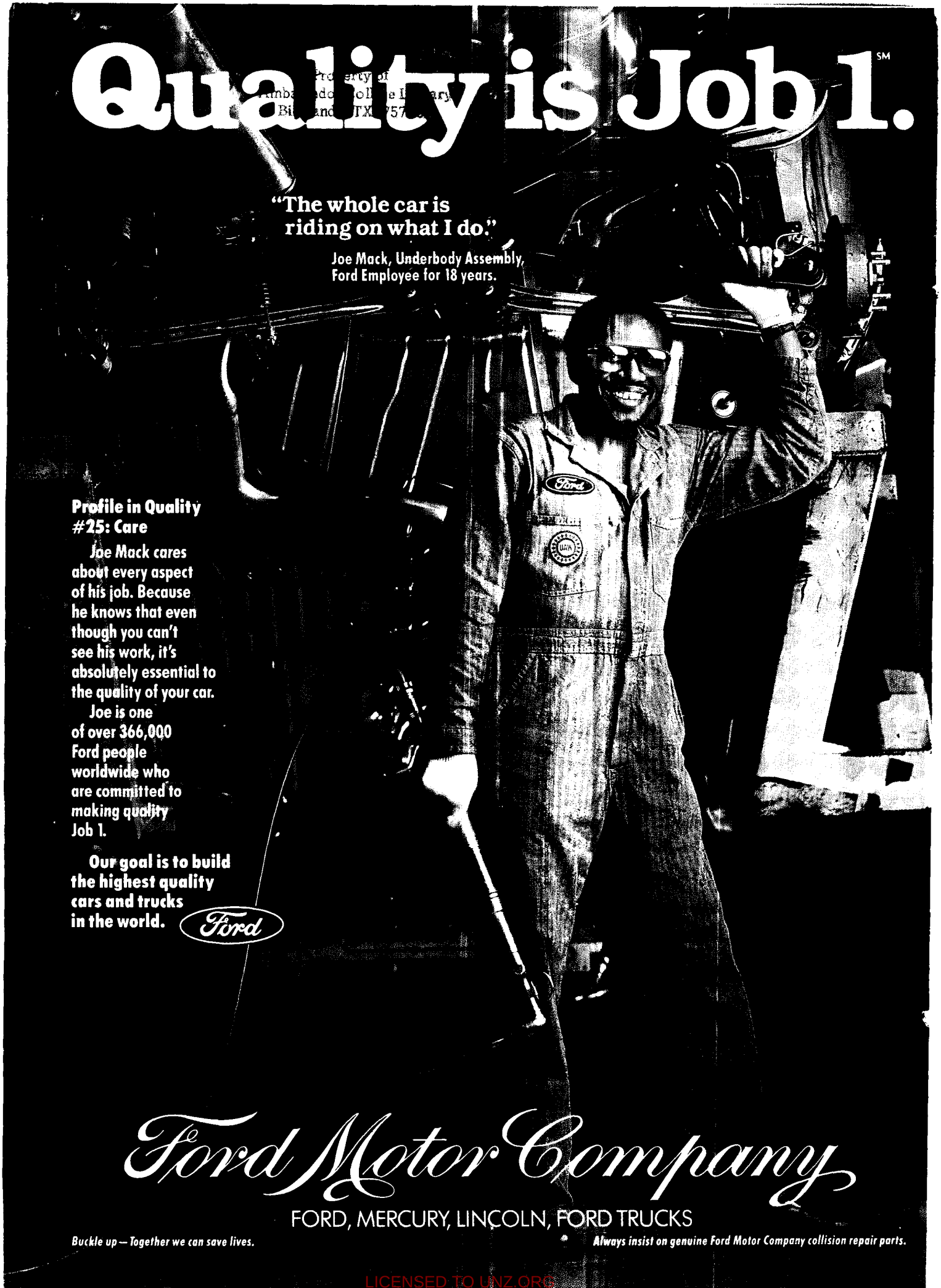

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